

Vision and Eye Health: It's a 2020 Opportunity

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Vision Lets Us Live, Work, Learn, and Play

Vision and eye health enables many aspects of daily living no matter your age, racial and ethnic background, or socio-economic circumstances. With healthy vision, we can engage with the world around us, learn in school, earn a living, and age independently with a high quality of life.

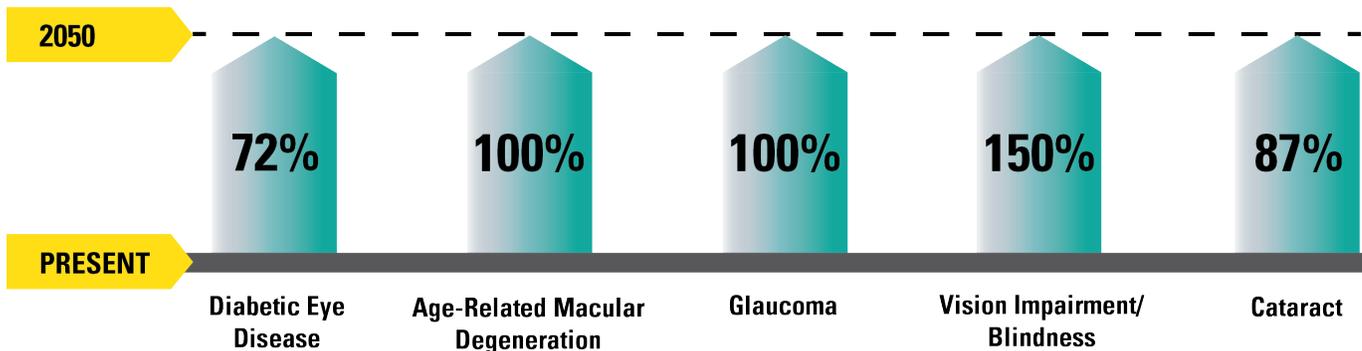
So, why are so many Americans living with less than clear, healthy eyesight?

Public opinion polls conducted over the last 40 years indicate that Americans consistently fear losing their vision second only to fear of cancer. Yet, vision and eye health is often an afterthought until changes to eyesight become noticeable and lost vision is gone forever. The most serious diseases and vision disorders can lead to permanent and irreversible damage to our eyes and loss of sight. This is happening far too often as Americans struggle to access quality eye care and treatments.

Vision impairments and eye disease are chronic conditions: they require ongoing treatment and management over the course of one's lifetime. **Eye disorders are the 5th leading chronic condition among those aged 65 years and older and 7th across all age groups.** Available prevalence estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that, in 2015, **1.02 million people were blind, 3.22 million people had vision impairment, and 8.2 million people had uncorrected refractive error.**² Our rapidly aging population and changes in demographics are key drivers of increasing rates of vision disease and loss; yet, patients continue to face significant barriers such as costs of treatment, coverage, lack of awareness of the importance of prevention, and gaps in the health care system.

The CDC estimates that, by 2050, incidence of diabetes-related eye disease will increase by 72%, rates of cataracts will spike to 87%, and age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma rates will both increase 100% while vision impairment and blindness will increase 150%.³ Diabetic eye disease, glaucoma, uncorrected refractive error, and age-related macular degeneration are the most common, **yet most preventable**, reasons why people lose their sight.

By 2050, the CDC estimates significant increases in blinding eye conditions.³



¹ "Chronic Care: Making the Case for Ongoing Care" Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010. <https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf54583>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vision Health Initiative: "The Burden of Vision Loss" (2017). <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/risk/burden.htm>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vision Health Initiative: "Looking Ahead: Improving Our Vision for the Future" (2017). <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/infographics/future.html>