

On World Sight Day, Put Your Vision First by Scheduling an Eye Exam

Alcon

Jack* lost his factory job when he could no longer operate machinery safely. Pam* had to quit her job as a gas station cashier because she couldn't drive to work. Maryann* fell when she failed to see her grandson's toy truck on the floor.

Like millions of Americans, the three were experiencing age-related vision changes. And like nearly half of U.S. adults, they hadn't had a comprehensive eye examination in years.¹

As we mark [World Sight Day](#) today, it's important to recognize that our vision changes naturally as we age. Vision changes, such as difficulty focusing our eyes to read or distinguishing colors, are common. Aging also makes it more likely to develop eye diseases, such as cataracts, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Due to our aging population, the number of people in the U.S. who are blind or visually impaired is expected to double by 2030.¹

Vision loss isn't merely a nuisance or a threat to employment and job productivity, though it is all of these. Eye problems can also imperil our health and safety.²

Vision changes can be symptoms of other health problems. Aging isn't the only factor that impacts vision. Health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes can also affect our sight. About 2.8 million adult Texans – one in seven – have diabetes and 600,000 Texans have diabetic retinopathy, an eye disease that is a leading cause of blindness in American adults.^{3,4}

The less we see, the more we fall. Our safety depends upon our ability to see the full area surrounding us, known as our visual field. The loss of visual field function increases the risk of falls in older adults. Patients with glaucoma, a disease that affects peripheral vision, are three times more likely to fall than peers unaffected by the disease.^{2,5,6}

Poor vision is associated with auto accidents. Older drivers with advanced glaucoma were six times more likely to be involved in car accidents than peers without the condition. Glaucoma often presents with no symptoms until it has irreversibly damaged eyesight.^{6,7}

The inability to see clearly endangers workers, costs employers. Seeing clearly is essential to safe work practices and performance, particularly in manufacturing facilities like those in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Eye and vision problems cost American businesses \$8 billion annually in lost productivity and medical expenses. It's worth noting that adding a vision plan to their healthcare benefit packages can save employers \$7 for every \$1 spent.^{8, 9, 10}

Loss of vision can increase the risk of death. Vision loss can interfere with the ability to complete everyday life tasks, such as grocery shopping, doing housework and using the phone. A decrease in the ability to perform these tasks, which are measures of the ability to live independently, has been associated with a greater risk of death.^{2, 11}

Eye diseases often develop without symptoms at first and eye exams can identify problems when they're most treatable. Adults aged 18 through 64 should have a comprehensive eye exam every one to two years, according to the American Optometric Association. Those with risk factors, such as diabetes or a family history of glaucoma, should have at least annual eye exams, as should those aged 65 and older.^{1, 12}

Here in Texas, where the uninsured rate is about double the national average,¹³ many forego eye exams due to cost. The Alcon Foundation is again sponsoring [free eye health and vision screenings at the State Fair of Texas](#) on World Sight Day on Thursday, October 10th. The exams are conducted by staff of Dallas' [Cedar Springs Eye Clinic](#) and Fort Worth's [Community Eye Clinic](#), which provide low-cost or free exams, treatment and glasses to uninsured/underinsured patients in North Texas.

This year's World Sight Day theme is Vision First, so let's put our vision first by scheduling a comprehensive eye exam today.

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**Not their real names*

David Endicott is the Chief Executive Officer of Alcon, the global leader in eye care, dedicated to helping people see brilliantly. Alcon was founded in Fort Worth more than 70 years ago, and today is the largest eye care device company in the world.

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