



# Time for you and eye

## Eye exams can improve more than your vision

Even if you can see well, regular eye exams are important to help keep your eyes healthy — and catch other health problems early. Eye exams can:

- Diagnose diseases, such as:<sup>1</sup>
  - Glaucoma — pressure in the eye, which can harm the optic nerve
  - Macular degeneration — changes in the retina that result in the slow loss of eyesight
  - Cataracts — clouding of the eye lens, which can blur vision
- Help spot other health problems that can also cause eye problems:<sup>2</sup>
  - Diabetes
  - High blood pressure
  - Certain cancers

Finding out about these problems early means you can get treatment early. This can help you get better and lower your health care costs.

### Eye on the numbers:

- **Over 81%** of Americans use some form of eyesight correction, such as glasses or contact lenses.<sup>3</sup>
- **Over 28 million** Americans over age 40 have eye problems that can lead to vision loss and blindness. Experts warn that the number will go up as people age.<sup>4</sup>
- **About 22 million** American adults have cataracts. It's the leading cause of blindness worldwide and of poor eyesight in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

### Diabetes can put your eyes at risk

It can make you very sensitive to light and damage your retina (diabetic retinopathy). But think about this:

- Twenty-five percent of people with diabetes don't know they have it,<sup>6</sup> so they don't get the treatment and protection they need.
- Only 17% of diabetics know they can be more sensitive to light, so most of them don't protect their eyes by wearing sunglasses.<sup>7</sup>
- Forty percent of diabetics don't get a yearly eye exam.<sup>8</sup> This puts their eyes at risk.
- Proper vision care can stop more than 90% of vision loss and blindness caused by diabetic retinopathy.<sup>5</sup>





## What you should do for your eyes:

- **Get a complete eye exam every year.** This may include dilation, where the pupil is dilated, or made bigger, so the retina can be checked for signs of eye disease and other health problems.
- **Protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.** Over time, the sun's UV rays can damage your eyesight through cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Wear sunglasses that block 100% of UV rays, even on cloudy days.
- **Protect your eyes from everyday bright light and glare.** They can make it hard to see and end up straining and tiring your eyes. If you wear eyeglasses, choose lenses that automatically adjust the tint based on the light around you. Move lamps, TVs and computer screens to reduce glare.

For more information on eye health and how to maintain good vision, go to [empireblue.com/eyehealth](http://empireblue.com/eyehealth).

1 National Eye Institute website: *Age-Related Eye Diseases* (accessed January 2015): [https://nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes/aging\\_eye](https://nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes/aging_eye).

2 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: *Rising Healthcare Costs/Systemic Disease* (accessed September 2014): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org).

3 American Optometric Association website: *American Eye-Q Survey Executive Summary* (May 2008): [aoa.org](http://aoa.org).

4 Archives in Ophthalmology website: *Cause and Prevalence of Visual Impairment Among Adults in the United States* (April 2004): [archophth.ama-assn.org](http://archophth.ama-assn.org).

5 National Institute of Health Medline Plus website: *Leading Causes of Blindness* (Summer 2008): <http://nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/summer08/articles/summer08pg14-15.html>.

6 American Diabetes Association website: *Diabetes Statistics* (June 2014): [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org).

7 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: *Eye/Overall Health Connection* (accessed January 2015): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org).

8 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: *Communicating the Value of Vision Benefits to Employers* (accessed September 2014): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org).