

NEBRASKA VISION HEALTH INITIATIVE

More than 3.4 million (3%) Americans aged 40 years and older are either legally blind (having visual acuity [VA] of 20/200 or worse or a visual field of less than 20 degrees) or are visually impaired (having VA of 20/40 or less) (Eye Diseases Prevalence Research Group, 2004). It is estimated⁶ that 17% of the age 65 and older population report “vision trouble.” Twenty-one million Americans report functional vision problems or eye conditions that may compromise vision⁷.

Blindness or vision problems to be among the top 10 disabilities among adults aged 18 years and older; however, Older people are more likely to experience vision loss because of age-related eye diseases. Vision loss has serious consequences for the individual as well as those who care for and about people who have compromised vision because reduced vision among mature adults has been shown to result in social isolation, family stress, and ultimately a greater tendency to experience other health conditions or die prematurely⁸.

Normal Vision



Vision with Cataracts



CATARACTS

A cataract is the clouding of an eye's lens. They are more prevalent in older adults, but can occur at any age; and can occur at birth. Treatment for cataracts is widely available. Medicare pays for cataract removal.

From the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System,

- 29.5% - 31.1% of Nebraskans age 65 or older reported having cataracts
- Nationally, over half (54%) of adults age 85 and older reported that they had cataracts removed.

Data estimates that over 15 million Americans age 65 and older have a cataract in one or both eyes. That estimate is expected to reach over 30 million Americans age 40 and older by 2020¹.

GLAUCOMA

Normal Vision



Vision with Glaucoma



Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the eye's optic nerve. It can result in vision loss or blindness. Glaucoma occurs when normal fluid pressure inside the eye rises. Recent studies have also shown that glaucoma can occur with normal eye pressure. When treated early, eyes can be protected from serious vision loss.

Diagnoses of glaucoma fall into two categories: open angle and closed angle. Open angle glaucoma is a chronic condition, this type of glaucoma advances slowly, with the individual not noticing vision loss until the disease is advanced. Closed angle glaucoma occurs more suddenly and is painful. Vision loss progresses quickly; however, the discomfort often leads patients to seek treatment before permanent damage occurs.

From the BRFSS,

- 9.5% - 10.2% of Nebraskans age 65 and older reported having glaucoma
- Nationally, 6% of adults ages 65-69 reported having glaucoma; the percentage increases to 16% for ages 85 and older

Studies from Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute suggest that glaucoma is more prevalent among blacks than among other U.S. racial and ethnic groups². In addition, the number of glaucoma cases among Hispanics age 65 and older who have diabetes is expected to increase 12-fold by 2050³.

Normal Vision



Vision with AMD



AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects the central part of the retina, the macula, which allows the eye to see fine detail. There are two forms of AMD: wet and dry. Wet AMD occurs when abnormal blood vessels behind the retina grow under macula, leading to blood and fluid leakage. Damage to these blood vessels cause damage and lead to rapid central vision loss.

Dry AMD occurs over time as the macula thins through aging, steadily blurring central vision. Dry AMD accounts for 85 to 90-percent of AMD cases.

From the BRFSS,

- 10.6% - 11.5% of Nebraskans age 65 and older reported having AMD
- Nationally 4% of adults ages 65-69 reported having AMD, and 22% among adults 85 years and older reported AMD

Data sources show that AMD is more likely to affect whites than members of other racial or ethnic groups. AMD is the leading cause of blindness in older adults, contributing to 54% of all blindness among white Americans⁴. Cases of early AMD are estimated to double by 2050, totaling 17.8 million⁴.

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes that usually affects both eyes. It consists of progressive damage to the blood vessels of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that is necessary for good vision.

From the BRFSS,

- 3.5% - 3.9 % of Nebraskans age 65 and older reported Diabetic retinopathy
- 25% of Nebraskans with visual impairment also reported having diabetes

Among Americans age 65 and older, diabetic retinopathy is expected to increase to 9.9 million by 2050³. National data shows black and Hispanic people with diabetes are more likely than whites to develop diabetic retinopathy⁵. A national study estimates that diabetic retinopathy among Hispanics age 65 and older will increase 9-fold by 2050³.

Normal Vision



Vision with Diabetic Retinopathy



Cited Resources

- 1 Congdon N, Vingerling JR, Klein BEK, West S, Friedman DS, Kempton J, et al. Prevalence of cataract and pseudophakia/aphakia among adults in the United States. *Archives of Ophthalmology* 2004;122:487–494.
- 2 Prevent Blindness America, National Eye Institute. *The Vision Problems in the U.S.: Prevalence of Adult Vision Impairment and Age-Related Eye Disease in America*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health; 2008.
- 3 Saaddine JB, Honeycutt AA, Narayan KM, Zhang X, Klein R, Boyle JP. Projection of diabetic retinopathy and other major eye diseases among people with diabetes mellitus: United States, 2005–2050. *Archives of Ophthalmology* 2008;126(12):1740–1747.
- 4 Rein DB, Wittenborn JS, Zhang X, Honeycutt AA, Lesesne SB, Saaddine J. Forecasting age-related macular degeneration through the year 2050: the potential impact of new treatments. *Archives of Ophthalmology* 2009;127(4):533–540.
- 5 Harris EL, Sherman SH, Georgopoulos A. Black-white differences in risk of developing retinopathy among individuals with type 2 diabetes. *Diabetes Care* 1999;22(5):779–783.
- 6 Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics. *Older Americans 2008: Key Indicators of Wellbeing*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office 2008.
- 7 Pleis JR, Lethbridge-Çejku M. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2006. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Stat* 2007;10(235).
- 8 Ellwein LB, Friedlin V, McBean AM, Lee PP. Use of eye care services among the 1991 Medicare population. *Ophthalmology* 1996;103:1732–1743.

State specific data from 2014 CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Resources

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
4600 Valley Road, Suite 100; Lincoln, NE 68510
402 471-2891
ncbvi.nebraska.gov

Nebraska Aging and Disability Resource Center
301 Centennial Mall South; Lincoln, NE 68508
dhhs.ne.gov/medicaid/Aging/Pages/ADRC.aspx

Prevent Blindness
preventblindness.org
(800) 331-2020
211 West Wacker Drive Chicago, IL 60606