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Vision Impairment and Blindness

Also called: Low vision

What is vision impairment?

Vision impairment is the loss of vision. It includes blindness, which means that you have lost all or most of your sight. It also includes low vision, which means you have some vision, but the vision loss makes it hard to do everyday activities. You may have trouble reading, shopping, cooking, writing, and watching TV. Low vision can't be fixed with **glasses, contact lenses** [<https://medlineplus.gov/eyewear.html>] , medicine, or surgery.

What causes vision impairment?

Aging doesn't cause vision loss on its own. But many diseases that are more common in older adults can cause it. The leading causes of low vision and blindness in the United States are age-related eye diseases such as **macular degeneration** [<https://medlineplus.gov/maculardegeneration.html>] , **cataracts** [<https://medlineplus.gov/cataract.html>] , and **glaucoma** [<https://medlineplus.gov/glaucoma.html>] . Other eye disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/eyediseases.html>] , **eye injuries** [<https://medlineplus.gov/eyeinjuries.html>] , and **birth defects** [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthdefects.html>] can also cause vision loss.

How is vision impairment diagnosed?

Vision impairment is diagnosed with a **dilated eye exam** [<https://medlineplus.gov/eyecare.html>] . Early warning signs of a vision problem can include not being able to see well enough to:

- Do everyday tasks like reading and driving
- Recognize people's faces
- Tell the difference between colors
- See the television or computer screen clearly

You can have these symptoms even though you are wearing glasses or contacts.

What are the types of low vision?

There are several types of low vision. Which type you have depends on the condition that caused your low vision.

Common types of low vision include:

- Central vision loss (not being able to see things in the center of your vision)
- Peripheral (side) vision loss (not being able to see things out of the corners of your eyes)
- Night blindness (not being able to see in low light)
- Blurry or hazy vision

What are the treatments for low vision?

Low vision is permanent. Glasses, medicine, and surgery can't cure low vision. But sometimes they can improve your vision, help you do everyday activities more easily, or keep your remaining vision.

Your treatment options will depend on the condition that caused your low vision. Ask your eye doctor which treatments might help you. They may recommend vision aids or vision rehabilitation, which might make everyday activities easier.

Vision rehabilitation teaches you how to live with your vision loss. It may include:

- Showing you how to use a magnifying device or screen readers for reading
- Helping you set up your home so you can move around more easily
- Employment and job training
- Assistive devices [<https://medlineplus.gov/assistivedevices.html>] , like lighting and reading stands

Your provider may suggest other resources, such as transportation and household services, to help you cope with your vision loss.

How can I make the most of my remaining sight?

The sooner vision loss or eye disease is found and treated, the greater your chances of keeping your remaining vision. Whatever the cause, lost vision cannot be restored. But it can be managed. A loss of vision means you may have to reorganize your life and learn new ways of doing things. Your provider may make suggestions to help make life easier. These may include:

If you have **some vision**:

- Visual aids such as magnifiers
- Telescopic glasses or monoculars for seeing distance
- Large print books
- Clocks with larger numbers
- Brighter lights
- Anti-glare sunglasses or glare shields

If you have **no vision** (blindness):

- Devices like text-reading software and braille books


Can vision impairment be prevented?

You can help take care of your vision by:

- Having regular comprehensive eye exams by an eye care professional
- Wearing sunglasses and protective eyewear to protect your eyes
- Making lifestyle changes to lower your risk of health conditions that can cause vision problems:
 - Getting regular physical activity [<https://medlineplus.gov/howmuchexercisedoineed.html>]
 - Staying at a healthy weight [<https://medlineplus.gov/weightcontrol.html>]
 - Quitting smoking [<https://medlineplus.gov/quittingsmoking.html>] (or not starting)
 - Eating a healthy diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/nutrition.html>]

NIH: National Eye Institute

Start Here

- Low Vision [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/low-vision>]
 (National Eye Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/espanol/aprenda-sobre-la-salud-ocular/enfermedades-y-afecciones-de-los-ojos/baja-vision>]


Symptoms

- Eye Symptoms [<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/symptoms-list>] (American Academy of Ophthalmology)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.aao.org/salud-ocular/sintomas-lista>]


Diagnosis and Tests

- Dilating Eye Drops [<https://www.aapos.org/glossary/dilating-eye-drops>]
(American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)
- Eye Exam and Vision Testing Basics [<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/eye-exams-101>]
(American Academy of Ophthalmology)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.aao.org/salud-ocular/consejos/examenes-de-los-ojos-101>]

Living With







- Assistive Devices: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/assistivedevices.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/assistivedevices.html>]
- Low Vision Rehabilitation Teams and Services [<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/low-vision-aids-rehabilitation>]
(American Academy of Ophthalmology)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.aao.org/salud-ocular/enfermedades/rehabilitacion-baja-vision>]
- Rehabilitation for Blindness [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/fundamentals/rehabilitation/rehabilitation-for-blindness>]
(Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/fundamentos/rehabilitaci%C3%B3n/rehabilitaci%C3%B3n-de-la-ceguera>]
- What Is Low Vision? [<https://aphconnectcenter.org/eye-conditions/eye-health/low-vision/>] (American Foundation for the Blind)
Also in Spanish [<https://aphconnectcenter.org/eye-conditions/eye-health/low-vision/?lang=es>]

Related Issues


- Abnormal Head Position [<https://www.aapos.org/glossary/abnormal-head-position>]
(American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)
- Talking with Your Eye Doctor [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/finding-eye-doctor/talking-your-eye-doctor>]  (National Eye Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/espanol/aprenda-sobre-la-salud-ocular/vision-saludable/encontrar-un-oculista/como-hablar-con-su-oculista>]

Genetics


- Alström syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/alstrom-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Autosomal dominant congenital stationary night blindness: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/autosomal-dominant-congenital-stationary-night-blindness>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Autosomal recessive congenital stationary night blindness: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/autosomal-recessive-congenital-stationary-night-blindness>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Boucher-Neuhäuser syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/boucher-neuhauser-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Bradyopsia: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/bradyopsia>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Choroideremia: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/choroideremia>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Fundus albipunctatus: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/fundus-albipunctatus>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Manitoba oculotrichoanal syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/manitoba-oculotrichoanal-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Mucopolipidosis type IV: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/mucopolipidosis-type-iv>]  (National Library of Medicine)

- Ophthalmo-acromelic syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/ophthalmo-acromelic-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Osteoporosis-pseudoglioma syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/osteoporosis-pseudoglioma-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- RAB18 deficiency: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/rab18-deficiency>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- SOX2 anophthalmia syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/anophthalmia-microphthalmia-esophageal-atresia-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Wagner syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/wagner-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- X-linked congenital stationary night blindness: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/x-linked-congenital-stationary-night-blindness>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Images

- Eye Disease Simulations [<https://medialibrary.nei.nih.gov/search?keywords=&f%5B0%5D=category%3A8#main-content>]  (National Eye Institute)


Videos and Tutorials

- Seeing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000109.htm>]  (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000109.htm>]




Test Your Knowledge

- Braille Bug: Games [<https://braillebug.org/games/>] (American Foundation for the Blind)

Statistics and Research

- Eye Health Data and Statistics [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-health-data-and-statistics>]  (National Eye Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/espanol/aprenda-sobre-la-salud-ocular/datos-y-estadisticas-relacionadas-con-la-salud-ocular>]
- Fast Facts: Vision Loss [<https://www.cdc.gov/vision-health/data-research/vision-loss-facts/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Blindness [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Blindness%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Vision Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Vision+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Vision, Low [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Vision,+Low%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)


Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)



- Article: Association of visual and hearing impairments with all-cause mortality in older... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40745270>]
- Article: Unexplored strains and job satisfaction for individuals with visual and auditory... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731401>]
- Article: A 20-year retrospective analysis of ocular and adnexal injuries resulting from... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731115>]

Vision Impairment and Blindness -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Vision+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+]



Reference Desk

- How the Eyes Work [https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/how-eyes-work]  (National Eye Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.nei.nih.gov/espanol/aprenda-sobre-la-salud-ocular/vision-saludable/como-funcionan-los-ojos]

Find an Expert

- American Foundation for the Blind [https://www.afb.org/]
- Find an Ophthalmologist [https://secure.aao.org/aao/find-ophthalmologist] (American Academy of Ophthalmology)
Also in Spanish [https://secure.aao.org/aao/encontrar-ofthalmologo]
- Finding an Eye Doctor [https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/finding-eye-doctor]  (National Eye Institute)
- National Eye Institute [https://www.nei.nih.gov/] 



Children

- About the Eye [https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/nei-for-kids/about-eye]   (National Eye Institute)
- Delayed Visual Maturation [https://aapos.org/glossary/delayed-visual-maturation] (American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)
- Keep an Eye on Your Child's Vision [https://www.cdc.gov/vision-health/prevention/youth-vision-problems.html] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Your Child's Vision [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/vision.html] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/vision.html]
- Your Eyes [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/eyes.html] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/eye.html]

Teenagers

- Visual Impairment [https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/visual-impairment.html] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/visual-impairment.html]

Older Adults

- Aging and Your Eyes [https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/vision-and-vision-loss/aging-and-your-eyes]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/ojos/envejecimiento-ojos]
- Your Aging Eyes: How You See as Time Goes By [https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/12/your-aging-eyes]  (National Institutes of Health)

Patient Handouts

- Blindness and vision loss [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003040.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003040.htm]
- Home vision tests [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003446.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003446.htm]
- Living with vision loss [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000526.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000526.htm]
- Vision - night blindness [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003039.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003039.htm>]

- Vision problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003029.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003029.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Blindness and vision loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003040.htm>]

Home vision tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003446.htm>]

Living with vision loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000526.htm>]

Ophthalmoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003881.htm>]

Seeing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000109.htm>]

Standard eye exam [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003434.htm>]

Uveitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001005.htm>]

Vision - night blindness [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003039.htm>]

Vision problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003029.htm>]

Visual acuity test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003396.htm>]

Visual field [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003879.htm>]

Related Health Topics

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The primary NIH organization for research on *Vision Impairment and Blindness* is the National Eye Institute
[<https://nei.nih.gov/>]

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