



PATIENT NEWSLETTER  
AUGUST 2023

# See

Celebrating  
a World  
of Vision



## Exploring Eye Disease Prevalence in African American Communities

According to the National Eye Institute, over 190,000 African Americans have low vision. Studies suggest that Black communities have a higher risk of developing some eye diseases that can lead to vision loss. However, while race or ethnicity may be a risk factor, it doesn't necessarily mean all African Americans are at risk. Cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma are just some of the eye conditions that may disproportionately affect African Americans.

### Cataracts

Among African Americans, cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss and blindness. When compared with Caucasians, African Americans are 4 times more likely to develop cortical cataracts. Research shows that most people who develop

cataracts are aged 40 and older, but being African American can also increase your chances. If you are diagnosed with cataracts early, your optometrist can offer treatment options that may help to improve your vision. They can also advise you on when surgery may be your best option.

### Diabetic Retinopathy

More than 850,000 African Americans have diabetic retinopathy, according to the National Eye Institute, and different factors can increase risks for diabetic retinopathy, such as long-term and uncontrolled diabetes. When patients have diabetes, it's important for their optometrist, primary care doctor, and other healthcare specialists work together as a team to maintain overall wellness and eye health.

### Glaucoma

Research shows that the prevalence of glaucoma is higher among African Americans than in Caucasians. Glaucoma is about 5 times more common in African Americans, and blindness from glaucoma is 6 times more common. On average, glaucoma occurs about 10 years earlier in African Americans than in other populations. For African Americans with a family history of glaucoma, the risk for developing the eye disease increases by 20%. A healthy lifestyle and regular eye exams may help prevent or delay glaucoma-related vision loss. If you've been diagnosed with glaucoma, following your treatment plan can help you avoid further vision loss.

### Autoimmune Conditions

Beyond cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma, several autoimmune conditions can also affect the eyes, including eczema, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis. Each of these conditions affect the eyes differently, but inflammatory dry eye is common in people with autoimmune conditions. Tell your eye doctor if you have an autoimmune disease so they can monitor your eyes for any related changes to your vision or eye health. They will also look for side effects with any medication you may be taking.

### Keeping Your Eyes Healthy

Focusing on eye health and practicing healthy behaviors like eating well and exercising can help keep your eyes healthy. Here are some other tips to keep your eyes healthy:

- Get regular eye exams
- Live a healthy lifestyle
- Protect your eyes from the sun
- Keep any health conditions under control



## Helping the Blind Learn to Cross Street




With advances in technology, blind or visually impaired people can learn to navigate the busiest city streets confidently and safely. Blind people can use assistive technologies, aids, and other senses to detect traffic flows. These devices and skills make it possible for visually impaired pedestrians to cross streets and travel independently by foot.

Despite recent advances, blind people still face challenges when crossing the street. Difficulties can range from minor inconveniences to potentially life-threatening problems. Common challenges for visually impaired pedestrians include background noise, an inability to easily detect approaching vehicles, and a lack of traffic.

Assistive technologies build on wayfinding abilities and external signals to help people determine the best moment to walk through an intersection. Several types of aids have been developed to improve street crossing for the visually impaired, including:

- Accessible pedestrian signals
- Assistive canes
- Mobile applications
- Smart traffic signals

People with good vision can also make it easier for blind pedestrians to cross streets carefully by checking for pedestrians before driving through intersections and obeying all traffic laws. With mutual awareness and patience, blind pedestrians and drivers can share the roads harmoniously.



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## What is the Iris?

The iris is the colored part of the eye. The iris controls the amount of light that enters the eye, similar to the aperture on a camera. The round opening in the center of the iris is called the pupil. The iris has tiny muscles that dilate (widen) and constrict (narrow) the pupil size.

The color, texture, and patterns of each person's irises are as unique as a human fingerprint.



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## EYE-DROPS

Dolphins can sleep with one eye open! Dolphins usually only sleep on one side of their brain at a time, meaning one half of their brain is snoozing with its eye shut, while the other half is wide awake and on the lookout for predators.



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SCEYENCE

## Do I Really Need Eyewear to Play Pickleball?



Nearly 30,000 eye injuries are caused each year by sports, but 90% of these accidents could be prevented by using protective eyewear. Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the United States over the past 2 years. It's played year-round indoors and outside and attracts players of all ages and skill levels. Pickleball and other racquet sports players are at risk of impact injuries to the eye from the ball, equipment, and other players.

If you're playing pickleball outdoors, sunglasses should be worn—even on overcast days—because UV rays can penetrate clouds. Tinted polycarbonate sunglasses can be used to help reduce glare and enhance contrast and depth perception. High-quality polycarbonate lenses are ideal for protecting the eyes from the close-range impact of balls coming at you at high speeds. Another option is polarized sunglasses, which can enhance the ball's contrast against the court. If you needed more incentive to protect your eyes, consider this: the world's top women's pickleball player, Anna Leigh Waters, wears protective eyewear in every match.

### Contact

**Tara O'Grady**  
tara@alldocsod.com

**Heather Kreidler**  
hkreidler@foxyeyecare.com