

EYE CONDITIONS



As we age, vision impairment is one of the most common physical losses. Many eye conditions that cause sight loss and blindness are insidious and aren't diagnosed until extreme measures are necessary.

Vigilance about your senior's eyesight is important to catch conditions early for easier and more reliable treatment. Some of the more common eye conditions that may affect your loved one are macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.



Macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss, affecting more than 10 million Americans. Most people affected have had good vision throughout their lives so the usual predictors may be absent. Regular vision exams with dilation are important for catching this early. Unfortunately, it is considered incurable, so the best hope is management of and stemming the progression.

Macular degeneration contributes to vision loss but doesn't cause complete blindness. Many people are more afraid of going blind than seeing less clearly and it's helpful to be able to ease your loved one's fears about this.

Because there is a genetic component, family members who feel at risk can consider a more food-based approach by eating foods containing high levels of lutein and zeaxanthin, such as egg yolks, yellow corn, orange and yellow peppers, kale, broccoli, spinach, kiwi, grapes, peas, green beans, apples, mango, scallions, orange juice, and various squashes.

Smokers and those with hypertension or high cholesterol are at an increased risk of macular degeneration.

Source: Macular.org and Bright Focus



Many doctors will prescribe nutritional supplements in formulations recommended by AREDS2 (The Age Related Eye Disease Study 2), sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). These supplements typically include the following micronutrients in specific doses*:

lutein

zeaxanthin

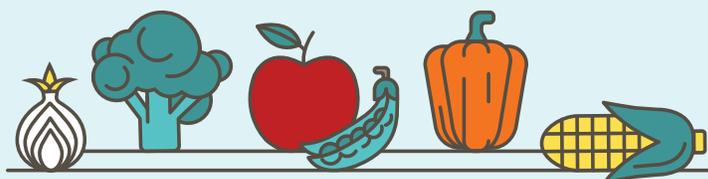
vitamin C

vitamin E

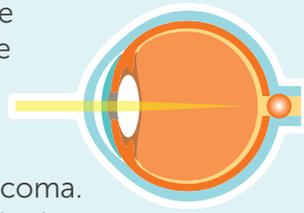
zinc oxide

cupric oxide

*This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your doctor before adding any supplements to your senior's lineup.



Glaucoma is a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve, the health of which is vital for good vision. More than 3 million people in the US have glaucoma. Many are unaware of it, as in the early stages there may be no symptoms. Damage is often caused by an abnormally high pressure in your eye.



Source: [Mayo Clinic](#)

Glaucoma has multiple types. The two most common are referred to as open-angle and angle-closure.

Open-angle glaucoma progresses more slowly and has very few initial symptoms. It is the most prevalent, affecting 70-90% of individuals.

Angle-closure glaucoma is largely an inherited condition so knowing your senior's family history is helpful. It can have a fast onset and is very painful. It is considered a medical emergency and should be treated immediately as blindness can set in as quickly as one to two days.

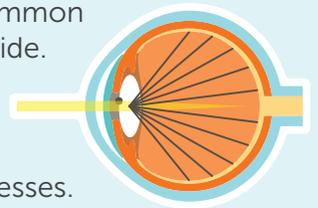
Common factors for all types of glaucoma include family history, increasing age, nearsightedness, hypertension, and diabetes.

Source: [American Family Physician](#) and [Bright Focus](#)

While these are three potential causes of vision loss and eye pain for your senior, they are not the only ones. It is important to include regular eye exams in your senior's healthcare lineup.



Cataracts are the most common cause of blindness worldwide. It's the easiest to see since it often causes a cloud on the pupil that is visible to others as it progresses.



Some other symptoms of cataracts include:

- Hazy vision that may be worse in bright light
- Weaker night vision
- Uncomfortable glare from vehicle headlights or bright sunlight
- A need for brighter light for reading
- Colors look faded or yellow

Cataracts are more prevalent in our elderly population with a prevalence of approximately 50 percent in those 75 and older, compared to less than 5 percent in persons under age 65. Cataract surgery is the most common Medicare-covered surgery.

Source: [American Family Physician](#) and [WebMD](#)