

Overview of Sensory Loss & the Older Adult

Education Health Care Professionals

Part 1: Vision Loss



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1

Vision Loss



- “Vision loss” is an inclusive term that covers all people who are blind or partially sighted, including people who have no sight from birth, people who are **LEGALLY BLIND** as well as people with vision loss below these levels.
- In addition to low visual acuity and narrowed visual field, vision loss can also be characterized by other forms of impairment such as loss of depth perception or contrast sensitivity.

(CNIB 2017)



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2

Prevalence of Vision Loss



- There are more than 5.5 million Canadians with a major eye disease that could cause vision loss.
- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss in Canada. There are about 1.4 million Canadians living with AMD, many of whom have vision loss or are at risk.
- Other major causes of vision loss include DIABETIC RETINOPATHY, GLAUCOMA, CATARACTS and REFRACTIVE ERROR.

(CNIB 2017)



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3

Causes of Vision Loss >>

- **Cataracts** are a gradual clouding of the natural lens of the eye, preventing light from reaching the retina affecting the ability to read or drive unless the cataract is removed.
- **Floater**s are tiny spots or specks that float across the field of vision:
 - they are normal, sometimes moving the eye around will make the spots shift out of central vision
 - if a sudden change in the number or types of spots or if the spots come with light flashes it is a sign of serious eye disease
- **Glaucoma** develops when the pressure within the eye starts to destroy the nerve fibres within the retina:
 - if not treated early, glaucoma can cause vision loss and blindness
 - regular eye examinations are required to detect it, with treatment of eye drops, medication, or surgery

(Health Canada 2006)



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4

Causes of Vision Loss

Diabetic Retinopathy



● Microaneurysm
 ● Exudate
 ● Deep hemorrhage
 Image of the retina seen through an ophthalmoscope.
 Retina shows various characteristics associated with background diabetic retinopathy.

- **Age-related macular degeneration** occurs when the **MACULA** is damaged.
 - this damage may be the result of many factors, including aging, and can cause permanent loss of central vision
 - regular eye exams can detect the disease early on and laser treatments can slow down the central vision loss
- **Diabetic retinopathy** is an eye problem linked to diabetes. Changes to the blood vessels caused by diabetes can starve the retina of oxygen.
 - this condition can go through many stages and can result in blindness
 - symptoms include cloudy vision and seeing spots
 - treatment can slow down vision loss, laser treatment in the early stages is often successful

(Health Canada 2006)

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5

Realities of Vision Loss



- Only one-third of Canadian working-age adults with significant vision loss (blind or partially sighted) are employed.
- Older people with vision loss (60+) are three times more likely than those with good vision to experience clinical depression.
- Approximately half of Canadian working-age adults with vision loss are struggling to make ends meet on \$20,000 a year or less.
- People with vision loss are at greater risk of social isolation and reduced community participation.

(CNIB 2017)

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6

Minimizing Your Risk

Few people realize that 75% of vision loss can be treated or prevented.

- For those over the age of 45, eyes should be examined on a regular basis.
- Individuals should be encouraged to avoid smoking. Smoking tobacco is a major risk factor in the early onset of age-related macular degeneration.
- Eat vitamin and mineral rich foods such as melons, citrus fruit, carrots, spinach, and kale. These may help slow the progress of age-related eye diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.
- Reduce glare as much as possible by using good lampshades, glare shields on computer monitors, and sunglasses. Sunglasses should provide 99 to 100% UV-A and UV-B protection. UV rays can harm your eyes even on a cloudy day.

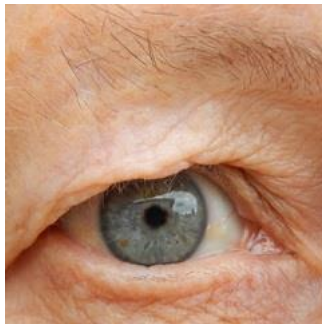
[\(Health Canada\)](#)



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7

Eye Safety



- Protect your eyes from accidents in your home.
- Put a grease shield over frying foods.
- Make sure spray cans and nozzles are pointed away when spraying.
- Wear safety glasses in the workshop and when using chemical products such as ammonia.
- Restrict night driving if there are problems with depth perception, glare, or other vision difficulties.

[\(Health Canada\)](#)



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8