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## **Millions of Americans Have Cataract, With the Numbers Expected to Soar in the Coming Years**

***- June is Cataract Awareness Month at Prevent Blindness, Aiming to Educate Public on Risk Factors, Financial Assistance Programs and More for Most Common Eye Disease -***

**CHICAGO (May 22, 2018)** – In the United States, more than 25 million Americans have cataract, a medical condition in which the lens of the eye becomes progressively opaque, resulting in impaired vision. Research from the Prevent Blindness study, "[The Future of Vision](#)," estimates that number will increase to 38.5 million by 2032, and to 45.6 million by the year 2050. Cataract progressively reduces the sharpness of vision and can cause a yellowish-brown tint to be applied to your field of vision. This can impact color identification, make it more difficult to read, and perform other routine activities.

Prevent Blindness, the nation's oldest eye health and safety non-profit organization, has declared June as Cataract Awareness Month to educate the public on risk factors, symptoms and treatment options.

There are also several possible risk factors for cataracts, such as:

- Aging
- Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Inflammation in the eye
- Hereditary influences
- Events before birth, such as German measles in the mother
- Long-term steroid use
- Eye injuries
- Eye diseases
- Smoking

In many cases, cataract surgery is recommended by an eye doctor. According to the [National Eye Institute](#), cataract removal is one of the most common operations performed in the United States. In about 90 percent of cases, people who have cataract surgery have improved vision afterward.

[EyeCare America](#) from the American Academy of Ophthalmology offers the “Seniors Program,” where qualified seniors ages 65 and older can obtain a free eye exam and up to one year of follow-up care for any condition diagnosed during the initial exam, for the physician services.

Most cataract surgery is covered by Medicare and health insurance. However, it is important that every patient talks to his or her eyecare professional and insurance provider to determine what surgery-related expenses are covered and by how much. According the [U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#), generally, Medicare does not cover eyeglasses or contact lenses. However, following cataract surgery that implants an intraocular lens, Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) helps pay for corrective lenses (one pair of eyeglasses with standard frames or one set of contact lenses).

Not all patients who are eligible for cataract surgery actually obtain it. A recent report in JAMA Ophthalmology from representatives of the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center, “[Association of Social Support Network Size With Receipt of Cataract Surgery in Older Adults](#),” found that Medicare beneficiaries with fewer family members in their social support network were less likely to receive cataract surgery. In fact, this population had 40 percent lower odds of receiving cataract surgery compared with those with more family members. The findings suggest that initiatives aimed at directing information on resources in the patient’s area, including transportation services, may result in increases in cataract surgeries for those in need.

“Although millions of Americans today have cataract, there are services and programs available to help,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “We encourage patients and their caregivers to work with their doctors to put an effective treatment plan together to protect or restore healthy vision.”

For free information on cataract, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit the Prevent Blindness website at [www.preventblindness.org/cataract](http://www.preventblindness.org/cataract). For a listing of vision care financial assistance programs in English or Spanish, visit <https://www.preventblindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information>.

### **About Prevent Blindness**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).