

# Get Your Eyes Checked to Protect Your Vision



Some common eye diseases can cause vision loss. And they may not have any warning signs – so you could have a problem and not know it. Even if you think your eyes are healthy, getting a dilated eye exam is the only way to know for sure.

**Black/African American adults have some of the highest rates of vision loss caused by eye diseases. There are many factors outside your control that can affect your health – like access to high-quality health care.**



The best thing you can do to prevent vision loss from eye diseases is to get a dilated eye exam.

## What is a dilated eye exam? .....

A dilated eye exam is the only way to check for eye diseases early, when they're easier to treat – and **before** they cause vision loss. The exam is simple and painless. Your eye doctor will give you some eye drops to dilate (widen) your pupil and check for eye diseases.



Talk with your eye doctor to learn how often you need to get an exam. Learn more about dilated eye exams at: [nei.nih.gov/dilated-eye-exam](https://nei.nih.gov/dilated-eye-exam)

## Need help getting an eye exam?

- Find an eye doctor at: [nei.nih.gov/find-a-doctor](https://nei.nih.gov/find-a-doctor)
- Find free or low-cost eye care at: [nei.nih.gov/low-cost-eye-care](https://nei.nih.gov/low-cost-eye-care)



## ..... What eye diseases are common in Black/African American people?

Black/African American people may be more likely to develop certain eye diseases:

- **Cataracts** are cloudy areas in the lens of your eye. You're more likely to develop them as you get older. You might not notice them at first, but over time they can make your vision blurry, hazy, or less colorful.
- **Glaucoma** damages the optic nerve in the back of your eye. Glaucoma doesn't usually have any early symptoms, but over time it slowly causes vision loss — often starting with your side vision. Without treatment, glaucoma can lead to blindness.
- **Diabetic retinopathy** is a condition in people who have diabetes that affects blood vessels in the retina (the light-sensitive tissue in the back of the eye). In the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, you might not have any symptoms. Later, you may see dark, floating spots or streaks that look like cobwebs.

## What else can I do to take care of my ..... eye health?

You can always take steps to keep your eyes healthy — whether you have an eye disease or not. For example, staying active and eating healthy can help protect your eye health. Learn more ways to take care of your eye health at: [nei.nih.gov/HealthyVision](https://nei.nih.gov/HealthyVision)



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