National Eye Health Education Program: An Overview

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NEHEP History

• In 1988, Congress provided the National Eye Institute (NEI) with new funds for public education on eye health and blindness prevention.

• The National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) was established in 1991 and serves as an extension of NEI activities in vision research.

• Research results are disseminated to health professionals, patients, and the public.

• Science-based information can be applied to preserving sight and preventing blindness.

“Eye diseases pose an enormous threat to our citizens. Many who are at increased risk of blindness from these diseases do not know that there are precautionary measures they should take to help save their sight.”

1988 U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Report
NEHEP Goal

To ensure that vision is a public health priority through the translation of eye and vision research into public and professional education programs.

NEHEP Program Areas

• Diabetic Eye Disease
• Glaucoma
• Low Vision
• ¡Ojo con su visión! (Watch out for your vision!)
• Vision and Aging
• Write the Vision (in development)
Focus on Health Disparities

- Targets populations at higher risk for eye diseases and conditions.
- Heavy focus on primary prevention.
NEHEP Advisory Structure

NEHEP Planning Committee
Advises on the development, implementation, and evaluation of NEHEP activities:

1. Recommending program priorities for NEHEP.
2. Advising on the development, implementation, and evaluation of NEHEP activities.
3. Recommending new opportunities for NEHEP to achieve its goals and objectives.
4. Facilitating cooperation among the NEHEP Partnership.
NEHEP Partnership

• Formal network of 65 organizations (nonprofit, academic, civic, professional, fraternal, and government) that have an interest in eye health education or represent populations at higher risk.

• Partnership organizations are national organizations with local affiliates.

• NEHEP also works with intermediary organizations outside the NEHEP Partnership.
NEHEP Partnership

The purpose of the Partnership is to establish ongoing, interactive, mutually beneficial relationships to achieve NEHEP goals and objectives.

- Participate in the development and implementation of NEHEP activities.
- Promote NEHEP resources and materials.
- Facilitate the coordination of educational activities.
- Endorse strategies and activities to further the aims of NEHEP.
- Exchange information, views, and materials on eye health education.
- Assist NEHEP in efforts to inform groups at higher risk.
NEHEP Five-Year Agenda

Provides strategic goals and objectives that guide NEHEP efforts for raising eye health awareness among people at higher risk for eye diseases and conditions, as well as those living with low vision.
Program Areas and Initiatives
Diabetic Eye Disease Education Program

Designed to increase awareness about diabetic eye disease and the need for people with diabetes to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to help prevent vision loss and blindness.

Key Target Audiences
All people with diabetes, especially:
  • African Americans
  • American Indians/Alaska Natives
  • Hispanics/Latinos
  • Older adults

Key Program Messages
  • Often no early symptoms.
  • People with diabetes need a comprehensive dilated eye examination at least once a year.
  • Early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up may prevent vision loss or blindness.
Diabetic Eye Disease Resources

- Booklet
- Tip Sheets
- Infographics
- Pamphlet
- Animations
- Consumer Website
- Teaching Tools
Glaucoma Education Program

Designed to raise awareness about glaucoma among people at higher risk, their families and friends, and health professionals who work with them.

Key Target Audiences
People at higher risk, including:
• African Americans over age 40
• Everyone over age 60, especially Hispanics/Latinos
• People with a family history of glaucoma

Key Program Messages
• Glaucoma has no warning signs.
• Left untreated, glaucoma can lead to permanent vision loss or blindness.
• People at higher risk for glaucoma should receive a comprehensive dilated eye exam every one to two years.
Glaucoma Resources

Glaucoma Toolkit

Consumer Website

Infographics

Slides

Infocards

Fact sheet

Social Media Toolkit

Animations & Videos
Low Vision Education Program

Designed to create awareness among children and adults with vision impairment, their families and friends, the general public, and healthcare providers about available vision rehabilitation services.

Key Target Audiences
People with vision impairment and their families and friends. Secondary audiences include:

- General public
- Health and social service providers

Key Program Messages

- People with low vision can maintain their independence and quality of life through vision rehabilitation.
- Vision rehabilitation can help people make the most of the sight they do have.
- There is hope, there is help.
Low Vision Resources

Educational Module

Infographics

Booklet and Videos

Consumer Website

Public Service Announcement

Fact Sheet

Infocards
¡Ojo Con Su Visión! Program (Watch Out for Your Vision!)

Designed to promote eye health among Hispanics/Latinos and assist health professionals and community health workers in educating them about vision health.

Key Target Audiences
- Hispanics/Latinos
- Health professionals
- Community health workers

Key Program Messages
- Hispanics/Latinos are at higher risk for certain eye diseases and conditions.
- Hispanics/Latinos can help protect their vision by getting regular comprehensive dilated eye exams.
- Eye diseases often have no early symptoms.
¡Ojo Con Su Visión! Activities

• Build the capacity of community health workers and health professionals to educate people with diabetes and those at higher risk for glaucoma.

• Facilitate in-person and online training workshops and webinars in English and Spanish.

• Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials and outreach strategies.
Building Community Capacity

A total of 745 people have been trained during 25 workshops and three webinars (October 2011– July 2015).

Legend:

🌟 2011  🌟 2012  🌟 2013  🌟 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes represented during webinars

🌟 2014  🌟 2015
¡Ojo Con Su Visión! Resources

Diabetes and Healthy Eyes Toolkit

-infographics-

Don’t Lose Sight brochures

Glaucoma Toolkit

Watch out for your vision! photonovella

Healthy Vision booklet

Infocards
Vision and Aging Program

Provides health and community professionals with tools and guidance for educating older adults about eye health, eye diseases and conditions, low vision, and the importance of comprehensive dilated eye examinations.

Key Target Audience
Adults ages 50 and older.

Key Program Messages
• Vision loss is not a normal part of aging.
• Everyone ages 50 and older should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam.
• Age-related eye diseases often have no early symptoms.
• Early detection and treatment may prevent vision loss or blindness.
Vision and Aging Resources

Making Vision a Health Priority
See Well for a Lifetime

Proteja su visión
- Siga una dieta sana.
- Mantenga un peso saludable.
- No fume.
- Utilice ropa de sol y un sombrero de ala ancha cuando salga al aire libre.

Everyone’s Vision Can Change With Age
As you age, it is normal to notice changes in your vision. Vision changes can make it difficult to perform everyday activities, such as reading, walking safely, taking medications, performing safe driving tasks, and driving.

Some changes are normal. These changes include:
- Losing focus, making it harder to see fine details
- Having trouble distinguishing between colors, such as seeing blue when there’s white
- Taking longer time to adjust to changing lighting
- Having trouble reading small print
- Seeing things double

These changes do not have to stop you from living an active lifestyle or maintaining your independence.

Medicare Benefit for Glaucoma
Medicare will cover an eye exam to detect glaucoma if you are:
- A person with diabetes
- Someone with a family history of glaucoma
- A person over the age 50 (or 40 if African American)
- Hispanic, aged 60 or older

Medicare does not cover eye exams for normal vision problems. If glaucoma is detected, it cannot be treated. Glaucoma can be treated. See your eye care professional for an exam today!

Medicare Benefit for Diabetic Eye Disease
If you have diabetes, Medicare will help pay for yearly eye exams to detect diabetic eye disease. However, Medicare does not cover routine eye care.
Diabetic eye disease can affect anyone with diabetes. It often has no symptoms or pain. If goes undetected, it can cause severe vision loss or blindness.

Diabetic eye disease can be treated. See your eye care professional for an exam today!

Medicare Benefit Card

See Well for a Lifetime Toolkit

Infographics
Write the Vision: African American Outreach

Promotes the importance of early detection in the prevention of vision loss and blindness from eye disease.

Key Target Audience
African Americans ages 40 and over.

Key Program Messages
- African Americans are at higher risk for certain eye diseases.
- If left undetected and untreated, eye diseases and conditions can cause vision loss and blindness.
- Regular comprehensive dilated eye exams can help protect vision.
Write the Vision Activities

• Fact sheet to introduce potential partners to the outreach initiative.
• Infographics highlight the eye diseases and conditions from which African Americans are more likely to lose vision.
• Tip sheet that outlines steps African Americans can take to help prevent vision loss.
• Materials for barber shop and salon outreach.
Write the Vision Resources

- Fact Sheets
- Infographics
- PowerPoint Slides
- Article
Surround-Sound Approach

- Magazines, Professional Publications
- Mobile/SMS
- Social Media, Blogs
- Radio
- YouTube, Videos
- Newspapers
Eye Health Observances

Expand year-round efforts to raise awareness.

• Glaucoma Awareness Month (January)
• Low Vision Awareness Month (February)
• Healthy Vision Month (May)
• Healthy Aging Month (September)
• National Diabetes Month (November)
Eye Health Observances

- Use traditional and social media to raise awareness.
- Provide subject matter experts for media interviews.
- Work with organizations to share information across their networks and in their own communities. NEHEP provides resources such as:
  - Social Media Toolkits
  - Drop-in articles
  - PSAs, infographics, & infocards
  - Promotional materials
  - Tip sheets
Media Outreach

From 2014-2015, NEHEP secured an estimated 520 million impressions in major media outlets.
Social Media

NEHEP manages active profiles on Facebook and Twitter and posts to other NEI social media outlets, including Flickr, Pinterest, and YouTube.

From September 2014-July 2015, NEHEP posted 637 messages on Facebook, which obtained a reach of more than 2 million, an increase of 1,104 percent compared to the same timeframe last year.
NEHEP Website and E-Newsletter
NEI Consumer Website

Available in English and Spanish:
- Common vision problems
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic eye disease
- Low vision
- Age-related eye diseases
- Tips for healthy eyes
- Financial assistance
- Tips for finding a doctor
- Educational resources
Webinars

- Straight Talk: Diabetic Eye Disease in Our Communities
- Educating Older Americans About Their Aging Eyes
- Using the *Diabetes and Healthy Eyes* Toolkit in Indian Country
- Living With Low Vision: How You Can Help
- Going Blind and Going Forward
- When Partners Engage, Great Things Happen
- Enhancing Eye Health Among Hispanics/Latinos
- Eye Health Knowledge of People at Risk for Glaucoma
- What People With Diabetes Know about Their Eyes
Fact Sheets for Health & Community Professionals

- Eye Disease Facts for Health Professionals
- Glaucoma Facts for Community Organizations
- Eye Disease Facts for Physician Assistants
- Vision Rehabilitation: Helping People with Low Vision
Professional Meetings and Conferences

Present at conferences such as:

- Aging in America
- American Public Health Association
- National Hispanic Medical Association
- American Diabetes Association
- Disparities Partnership Forum
- National Conference on Health Communication, Marketing, and Media
Helping Patients With Diabetes Keep Their Eye Health on TRACK

What EAs Can Do to Prevent Vision Loss and Blindness

BY NEYAL J. AMMARI-REICH, MPH, MCHES

Patients with diabetes are at risk of developing diabetic eye disease—a group of eye complications that include diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataracts—all of which can lead to vision loss or blindness. All people with diabetes, whether type 1, type 2 or gestational, are at risk. The longer a person has diabetes, the more likely he or she is to develop diabetic eye disease. Controlling glucose levels, blood pressure, and cholesterol are among the best things patients can do to delay the onset or progression of diabetic eye disease, especially diabetic retinopathy, the most common form, which damages the blood vessels in the retina.

Living with vision loss or blindness can dramatically impact a person’s quality of life and ability to self-manage his or her disease. With the prevalence of diabetes continuing to rise, rates of vision loss from diabetic eye disease also continue to increase, causing a major concern for public health. In fact, diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults ages 20–74 years, with diabetic retinopathy causing 12,000 to 24,000 new cases of blindness each year, according to the National Diabetes Statistics Report.

Early Diagnosis Can Prevent Loss of Sight

Diabetic eye disease often has no symptoms in its early stages. Most people do not experience vision problems until the disease reaches an advanced stage. Since people often seek eye care only when they begin to notice vision problems—and do not have an annual comprehensive dilated eye exam as recommended in healthcare guidelines—many are diagnosed when it is too late for treatment to be effective and vision loss often cannot be restored.

But there is good news: Early diagnosis, treatment, and appropriate follow-up care can prevent or delay severe vision loss in more than 95 percent of patients with diabetic eye disease. You can be instrumental in helping patients with diabetes protect their sight by asking them...
Questions?

www.nei.nih.gov/nehep

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