Myths And Facts:
Clearing Up A Few Misconceptions About Eye Exams

(NAPSA)—People are constantly reminded to eat right and exercise to stay healthy. But what about eye health? Dozens of eye diseases and conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers, can be diagnosed and detected during a simple eye exam.

This is because the eye is actually part of the nervous system. An eye physician can detect abnormalities in the fine blood vessels at the back of the eye before they're seen in other parts of the body. Trouble spotted in the eye may signal health-related changes that may otherwise go undetected.

Eye Health Truths

Here are the facts on a few common myths about eye exams:

- **Myth:** Eye exams only provide a prescription for eyeglasses.
- **Fact:** There are two different types of eye examinations:

1. A comprehensive medical eye exam is typically performed by an ophthalmologist, a physician who specializes in medical and surgical eye care. Your ophthalmologist will dilate your eyes with drops. This lets him or her thoroughly examine your retina and optic nerve, located at the back of your eye, for signs of damage from disease.

2. A routine eye exam determines whether you need glasses or contact lenses to see clearly. You will be asked to read a standardized chart to determine how well you see at different distances. This exam is typically performed by an optometrist.

- **Myth:** An eye exam is unnecessary unless you have a vision problem.
- **Fact:** Don't wait to notice a vision problem before you get an eye exam. Some eye diseases and conditions have no early warning signs until vision is lost. If they're detected early, however, vision can usually be saved.

Eye Exam Recommendations

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that people get a baseline eye examination at age 40, the time when early signs of disease or changes in vision may occur. This exam is just as important as a baseline screening for diabetes or certain cancers. If you're age 65 or older, have your eyes checked every year or two for signs of age-related eye diseases such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and glaucoma.
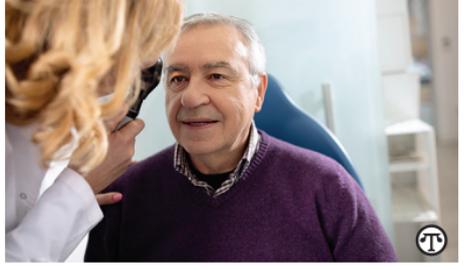
It's wise to have a professional check your eyes regularly.

Sight-Saving Care

If you are 65 or older and worry about the cost of an exam, the American Academy of Ophthalmology's EyeCare America program may be able to help. EyeCare America provides medical eye exams, often at no out-of-pocket cost, to eligible people through a network of approximately 6,000 volunteer ophthalmologists. Nearly 2 million people have been helped through EyeCare America's two programs. The Seniors program connects eligible seniors with a volunteer ophthalmologist for a medical eye exam at no out-of-pocket cost for up to one year, while the Glaucoma program offers a glaucoma eye exam to eligible individuals who are at increased risk for glaucoma, determined by their age, race, and family history.

Program Eligibility:

Seniors Program:
- U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Age 65 or older
- Not belong to an HMO or have eye care benefits through the VA
- Not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years

Glaucoma Program:
- U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Not belong to an HMO or have eye care benefits through the VA
- Not had an eye exam in 12 months or more
- At increased risk for glaucoma, determined by your age, race, and family history

Learn More

For further information about the program and to see if you, a family member or anyone else you know may be eligible, visit www.aao.org/eyecareamerica.

EyeCare America is co-sponsored by the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc., with additional support provided by Alcon.