



Reducing High Rates Of Vision Loss

(NAPSA)—While it's a wise idea for everyone to see an eye care professional at least once every year or so, this is especially important for Latinos.

The Reasons

Research that was supported by the National Eye Institute (NEI), part of the National Institutes of Health, revealed that Mexican-Americans are at greater risk for developing visual impairment, blindness, diabetic eye disease and cataracts than non-Hispanic whites.

"This study showed that Latinos develop certain vision conditions at different rates than other ethnic groups," said Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Ocular Epidemiology Center at the Doheny Eye Institute, University of Southern California. "The burden of vision loss and eye disease on the Latino community is increasing as the population ages and many eye diseases are becoming more common."

Researchers found Latinos developed visual impairment and blindness at the highest rate of any ethnic group in the country. Overall, nearly 3 percent of Latinos developed visual impairment and 0.3 percent developed blindness in both eyes, with older adults affected more frequently. Of Latinos age 80 and older, 19.4 percent became visually impaired and 3.8 percent became blind in both eyes.

U.S. Latinos were more likely to develop diabetic retinopathy than non-Hispanic whites. One in three study participants who had diabetes developed diabetic retinopathy, with Latinos ages 40 to 59 having the highest rate.



Latinos especially need to see an eye care professional regularly.

Researchers also found that Latinos who already had visual impairment, blindness or diabetic retinopathy in one eye when they began the study had very high rates of developing the condition in the other eye during the study. More than half of participants who already had diabetic retinopathy in one eye developed it in the other eye.

"These results underscore the importance of Latinos, especially those with diabetes, getting regular, dilated eye exams to monitor their eye health," Varma said. "Eye care professionals should closely monitor those who have eye disease in one eye because their quality of life can be dramatically impacted if they develop the condition in both eyes." Yet previous studies showed more than 60 percent of eye disease in Latinos is undiagnosed and undetected.

Learn More

For information about the National Eye Health Education Program's ¡Ojo con su Visión! (Watch out for your Vision) program, which provides culturally appropriate vision health information for Latinos, visit www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/ojo/index.asp.