



# Eye on Health

## Perfect Vision Still Vulnerable To Blindness

*American Academy Of Ophthalmology Wants Americans To Know Their Risks And Save Their Sight*

(NAPSA)—When Pauline Leeker, a teacher in Chesapeake, Va., was driving to work one day, she noticed that she couldn't distinguish the road from the curb. As time went on, she had difficulty seeing at night and eventually stopped driving altogether. By the time Leeker went to her ophthalmologist, she was legally blind in one eye and her activities were restricted. However, thanks to cataract surgery and an implantable lens, Leeker is now seeing the world in a whole new way.

"After the operation, I was amazed," says Pauline. "I was able to resume driving, colors were so much brighter and I no longer felt the fear of going out alone."

Through its EyeSmart campaign, the American Academy of Ophthalmology reminds Americans with no signs or risk factors for eye disease of the importance of getting a baseline eye disease screening at age 40—the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur.

"Many eye diseases progress without any warning signs," says Stephanie Marioneaux, M.D., a clinical correspondent for the Academy and Pauline's doctor. "Gradual changes in vision can impact your ability to function independently

**"Knowing your risks can  
save your sight."  
—Stephanie Marioneaux, M.D.**



and have confidence in your abilities. One of the hardest adjustments a person can make is adapting to a life with permanent vision loss. That is why nothing replaces a comprehensive baseline eye exam."

Based on the results of the initial screening, an ophthalmologist will prescribe the necessary intervals for follow-up exams. For individuals at any age with symptoms of or at risk for eye disease, such as those with a family history of eye disease, diabetes or high blood pressure, the Academy recommends seeing their ophthalmologist to determine how frequently their eyes should be examined.

By 2020, 43 million Americans will face significant vision loss or blindness from age-related eye diseases such as cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration, an increase of more than 50 percent over the current number of Americans with such diseases. Despite these statistics, Americans remain relatively

unconcerned about vision loss. A survey conducted by the Academy for its EyeSmart campaign reveals that less than a quarter of Americans (23 percent) are very concerned about losing their vision, while a majority feel weight gain or joint and back pain are of greater concern than vision loss.

"Unfortunately, millions of people will suffer significant vision loss and blindness because they don't know the risks," said Dr. Marioneaux. "That is why the Academy launched the EyeSmart campaign, because knowing your risks can save your sight."

Learn about eye diseases, your risk factors and the names of eye M.D.s in your area by visiting [www.GetEyeSmart.org](http://www.GetEyeSmart.org).

### **About The American Academy Of Ophthalmology**

AAO is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.s—with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three "O's"—opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all—eye diseases and injuries—and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D. in your area, visit the Academy's Web site at [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org).