



# To Your HEALTH



WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

# GOOD VISION

## MILLIONS DON'T SEE AS WELL AS THEY COULD

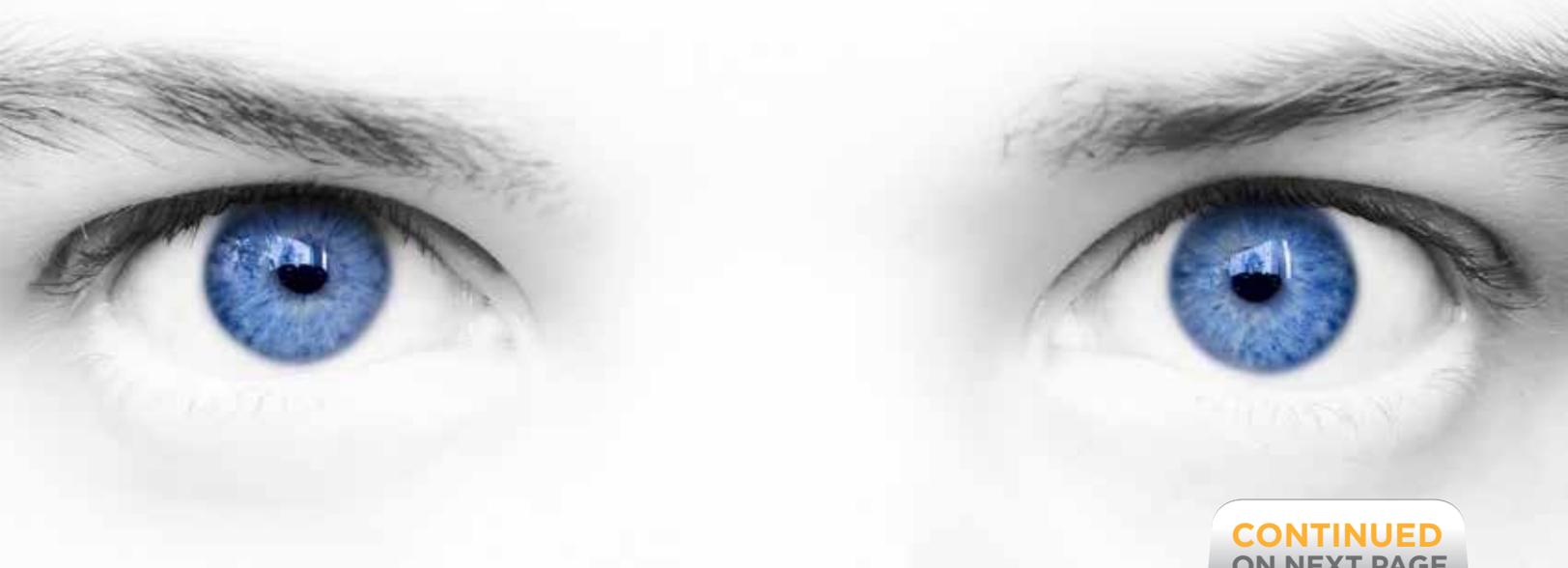
A comprehensive report has found that although 94 percent of Americans 12 years old and older have good vision, the remaining 6 percent—14 million people—are visually impaired. Of these, more than 11 million could improve their vision with eyeglasses or contact lenses.

The study, which was designed and supported by the National Eye Institute, was part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, an ongoing survey by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 15,000 people participated in the survey. They were interviewed in their homes and invited to undergo a comprehensive health examination in a mobile

examination center (MEC). More than 14,000 reported to a MEC, and more than 13,000 completed vision tests.

The study found that teenagers, people with diabetes, Hispanics and people who are economically disadvantaged have higher rates of visual impairment and can most benefit from corrective lenses. These findings will help policy planners and health care workers focus their efforts where they can do the most good.

Regular eye exams should be part of everyone's routine health care. Even if your vision seems fine, it's a good idea to see an eye care professional regularly for routine vision screenings and eye examinations.



**CONTINUED**  
ON NEXT PAGE





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## Keep Your Eyes Healthy! Simply Tips to Maintain Your Vision

**Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam.** You might think your vision is fine or that your eyes are healthy, but visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to really be sure. A dilated eye exam is the only way to detect eye diseases in their early stages.

During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, your eye care professional places drops in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupil to allow more light to enter the eye the same way an open door lets more light into a dark room. This enables your eye care professional to get a good look at the back of the eyes and examine them for any signs of damage or disease.

**Know your family's eye health history.** Talk to your family members about their eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with a disease or condition since many are hereditary.

**Eat right to protect your sight.** You've heard carrots are good for your eyes. But eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens is important for keeping your eyes healthy too.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions, which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.

**Quit smoking or never start.** Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataract, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

**Be cool and wear your shades.** When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

**Give your eyes a rest.** If you spend a lot of time at the computer or focusing on any one thing, you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes can get fatigued. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This can help reduce eyestrain.



### CHECK YOUR VISION

There are many signs that can signal vision loss. Even with your regular glasses, do you have difficulty:

- ✓ Recognizing faces of friends and relatives?
- ✓ Doing things that require you to see well up close, like reading, cooking, sewing or fixing things around the house?
- ✓ Picking out and matching the color of your clothes?
- ✓ Doing things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to?
- ✓ Reading street and bus signs or the names of stores?

Vision changes like these could be early warning signs of eye disease. If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, see an eye-care professional as soon as possible. The earlier your problem is diagnosed, the better your chance of keeping your remaining vision.

