

# October is Blindness Awareness Month

## What is blindness *exactly*?<sup>1</sup>

A person with a visual acuity of 20/200 or worse with correction is legally blind. At 20 feet, they can see what a person with average vision (20/20) sees at 200 feet. Visual field is also taken into consideration—having a visual field of 20 degrees or less also qualifies as legally blind.

## What causes blindness?

- Glaucoma – eye conditions that can damage the optic nerve
- Macular degeneration – reduces ability to see details
- Cataracts – “spots” that cause cloudy vision
- Lazy eye – a condition that makes it difficult to see details
- Optic neuritis – inflammation that may lead to temporary or permanent vision loss
- Tumors – located on retina or optic nerve
- Diabetes/stroke complications – issues that can lead to blindness
- Birth defects, eye injuries, and complications from eye surgery

## What are the symptoms?

These are the symptoms that may accompany blindness:

- Cloudy vision
- Inability to see shapes
- Seeing only shadows
- Poor night vision
- Tunnel vision

## Can it be treated?<sup>2</sup>

While there is no cure for blindness, there are ways to mitigate its effects, depending on the cause.

- Blindness resulting from cataracts can sometimes be reversed with cataract surgery.
- Blindness due to poor nutrition can be addressed with dietary changes.
- Infectious and inflammatory causes of blindness can be treated with medication.
- Corneal transplantation can help restore vision in people with corneal scarring.

## What about prevention?<sup>3</sup>

As with most conditions, it's better to take care of your eyes now than to wish you had later. By staying active, controlling your blood pressure, protecting your eyes from the sun, avoiding smoking, and eating healthy foods, your eyes will have a better chance of seeing well into the future.

## Blindness Fast Facts



**26.9 million**

American adults experiencing vision loss<sup>4</sup>



**2.2 billion**

people in the world have a vision impairment or blindness<sup>5</sup>



**2050**

when blindness and visual impairment is expected to double<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://blind.iowa.gov/legal-definition-blindness>, accessed May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.medicinenet.com/blindness/article.htm#is\\_blindness\\_preventable](https://www.medicinenet.com/blindness/article.htm#is_blindness_preventable), accessed May 2020.

<sup>3</sup> <http://preventblindness.org/healthy-living-healthy-vision/>, accessed May 2020.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/statistics/adults>, March 2019.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>, October 2019.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/visual-impairment-blindness-cases-us-expected-double-2050>, May 2016.

*Material discussed is meant for general informational purposes only and is not to be construed as medical advice. Although the information has been gathered from sources believed to be reliable, please note that individual situations can vary. You should always consult a licensed professional when making decisions concerning eye care.*

Avēsis Incorporated and Avēsis Third Party Administrators, Inc., are wholly owned subsidiaries of Guardian. Guardian<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY. ©2020 Avēsis Incorporated. ©2020 Guardian. All rights reserved. Used with express permission. #2020-106078 (exp. 8/22)