

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035
shecker@preventblindness.org

For Cataract Awareness Month in June, Prevent Blindness Provides Educational Information and Resources on the Leading Cause of Vision Loss in the United States

CHICAGO (May 26, 2022) – More than half of all Americans age 80 or older either have cataracts or have had surgery to remove cataracts, according to the [National Eye Institute \(NEI\)](#). The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) states that cataract is the leading cause of vision loss in the United States, and the leading cause of blindness worldwide. [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s leading nonprofit eye health and safety organization, has declared June as Cataract Awareness Month to educate the public on risk factors, symptoms, types of cataract, and cataract surgery.

A cataract is a clouding of the eye’s lens which blocks or changes the passage of light into the eye. The lens of the eye is located behind the pupil and the colored iris and is normally transparent. The lens helps to focus images onto the retina – which transmits the images to the brain.

There are several possible [risk factors for cataracts](#), such as:

- Age
- Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Inflammation in the eye
- Hereditary influences
- Events before birth, such as German measles in the mother
- Long-term steroid use
- Eye injuries
- Eye diseases
- Smoking

Although rare, cataract may also occur in children, also known as “pediatric cataract.” Prevent Blindness has declared 2022 as the [Year of Children’s Vision](#), to raise awareness and education of children’s vision and eye health issues. According to the [American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus \(AAPOS\)](#), approximately three out of 10,000 children have a cataract. Pediatric cataracts often occur because of abnormal lens development during pregnancy. Cataracts can result from genetic or eye structural problems, they can run in families, be caused by infections, or they can occur spontaneously without a known cause. Lens malformations that occur in

conjunction with medical problems are often the result of a genetic or metabolic problem. These cataracts may be present at birth or may develop during childhood.

For some adults or children with cataract, surgery may be recommended by an eye doctor. The NEI states that cataract surgery is one of the most common operations in the United States. And, 9 out of 10 people who get cataract surgery can see better afterwards with most people being completely healed [8 weeks after their surgery](#).

For those in need of financial assistance, [Mission Cataract USA](#), coordinated by the Volunteer Eye Surgeon's Association, provides free cataract surgery to people of all ages who have no Medicare, Medicaid, third party insurance or any other means to pay for needed cataract surgery. [EyeCare America](#), from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, offers the "Seniors Program" that connects eligible seniors 65 and older with local volunteer ophthalmologists who provide a medical eye exam often at no out-of-pocket cost, and up to one year of follow-up care for any condition diagnosed during the initial exam, for the physician services.

"Cataract is very common and affects more people than any other eye disease," said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. "The good news is that vision loss from cataract can be restored with treatment. We encourage everyone to learn the facts about cataract and the steps that can be taken to see clearly."

For free information on cataract or cataract surgery, please visit <http://preventblindness.org/ataract/>. For a listing of vision care financial assistance programs in English or Spanish, visit <https://preventblindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information/>.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, visit us at preventblindness.org, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

###