

Financial Aid for Eye Care

Many state and national resources regularly provide aid to people with vision problems. The National Eye Institute, which supports eye research, does not help individuals pay for eye care. However, if you are in need of financial aid to assess or treat an eye problem, you might contact one or more of the following programs.

You may also contact a social worker at a local hospital or other community agency. Social workers often are knowledgeable about community resources that can help people facing financial and medical problems.

Eye Exams and Surgery

- **EyeCare America**, a public service foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). Provides comprehensive eye exams and care for up to one year, often at no out-of-pocket expense to eligible candidates age 65 or older. Its Glaucoma EyeCare Program provides a glaucoma eye exam. The EyeCare America Children's EyeCare Program educates parents and primary care providers about the importance of early childhood (newborn through 36 months of age) eye care. Telephone: 1-877-887-6327. Website: <http://eyecareamerica.org>.
- **VISION USA**, coordinated by the American Optometric Association (AOA), provides free eye care to eligible uninsured, low-income workers and their families. Telephone: 1-800-766-4466. Website: <http://www.aoa.org/visionusa.xml>.

- **Lions Clubs International** is a service organization whose local club members are all volunteers. A local Lions club in or near your community may sponsor a program that may help you buy corrective eyewear or obtain eye health care. To find a Lions club near you, access the Club Locator at <http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/find-a-club.php>.
- **Mission Cataract USA** is a program providing free cataract surgery to people of all ages who have no other means to pay. Surgeries are scheduled annually on one day. Website: <http://www.missioncataractUSA.org>.
- **InfantSEE®** is a public health program designed to ensure early detection of eye conditions in babies. Member optometrists provide a comprehensive eye and vision assessment for infants within the first year of life regardless of a family's income or access to insurance coverage. Telephone: 1-888-396-3937. Website: <http://www.infantsee.org>.

Eyeglasses

- **Sight for Students** is a Vision Service Plan (VSP) program that provides free eye exams and glasses to low income and uninsured children 18 years and younger that qualified for the program. Telephone: 1-888-290-4964. Website: <http://www.sightforstudents.org>.
- **New Eyes for the Needy** provides vouchers for the purchase of new prescription eyeglasses. Website: <http://www.neweyesfortheneedy.org>.

Prescription Drugs

- **NeedyMeds** offers a database of medications that can be obtained free or at low cost by uninsured, low income patients, usually through manufacturer programs. Website: <http://www.needymeds.org>.

- **Partnership for Prescription Assistance** offers a single point of access to more than 475 public and private patient assistance programs; it is funded by pharmaceutical companies. Telephone: 1-888-477-2669. Website: <https://www.pparx.org>.
- **Patient Access Network** helps eligible underinsured patients afford the copayments for pharmaceutical treatment for Age-Related Macular Degeneration. Telephone: 1-866-316-7263. Website: <http://www.panfoundation.org>.
- **RX Assist** provides consumer information, resources, news and a directory of patient assistance programs that offer affordable or free medications. Telephone: 401-729-3284. Website: <http://rxassist.org>.

Government Programs

- **Medicare Benefit for Eye Exams**

For People with Diabetes—People with Medicare who have diabetes can get a dilated eye exam to check for diabetic eye disease. Your doctor will decide how often you need this exam.

For People at Risk for Glaucoma—Glaucoma is a leading cause of vision loss. People at high risk for glaucoma include those with diabetes or a family history of glaucoma, are African Americans age 50 or older or, are Hispanic and 65 or older. Medicare will pay for an eye exam to check for glaucoma once every 12 months.

Patients must pay 20 percent of the Medicare-approved amount after the yearly Part B deductible. Telephone: 1-800-633-4227. Website: <http://www.medicare.gov>.

● State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)

For little or no cost, this insurance pays for doctor visits, prescription medicines, hospitalizations, and much more for children 18 years and younger. Most states also cover the cost of dental care, eye care, and medical equipment. Telephone: 1-877-543-7669. Insure Kids Now!

Website: <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov>.

The National Eye Institute (NEI) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and is the Federal government’s lead agency for vision research that leads to sight-saving treatments and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness.



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