

# 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 callers through its seniors and Diabetes EyeCare Programs. 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: 1-800-222-EYES (3937). Website: <http://eyecareamerica.org>.
- **VISION USA**, coordinated by the American Optometric Association (AOA), provides free eye care to uninsured, low-income workers and their families. Telephone: 1-800-766-4466. Website: <http://www.aoa.org/x5607.xml>.

- **Lions Clubs International** provides financial assistance to individuals for eye care through local clubs. A local club can be found by using the “club locator” button found on their website at <http://www.LionsClubs.org>.
- **Mission Cataract USA**, coordinated by the Volunteer Eye Surgeons’ Association, 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, usually in May. Telephone: 1-800-343-7265. Website: <http://www.missioncataractUSA.org>.
- **Knights Templar Eye Foundation** provides assistance for eye surgery for people who are unable to pay or receive adequate assistance from current government agencies or similar sources. Mailing address: 1000 East State Parkway, Suite I, Schaumburg, IL 60173. Telephone: (847) 490-3838. Website: <http://www.knightstemplar.org/ktef/ktef-faq.htm#contact>.
- **InfantSEE®** is a public health program designed to ensure early detection of eye conditions in babies. Member optometrists provide a free comprehensive infant eye assessment to children younger than one year. Telephone: 1-888-396-3937. Website: <http://www.infantsee.org>.

## Eyeglasses

- **Sight for Students**, a Vision Service Plan (VSP) program provides eye exams and glasses to children 18 years and younger whose families cannot afford vision care. Telephone: 1-888-290-4964. Website: <http://www.sightforstudents.org/>.
- **New Eyes for the Needy** provides vouchers for the purchase of new prescription eyeglasses. Mailing address: 549 Millburn Avenue, P.O. Box 332, Short Hills, NJ 07078-0332. Telephone: (973) 376-4903. E-mail: [neweyesforthenedy@verizon.net](mailto:neweyesforthenedy@verizon.net). Website: <http://www.neweyesforthenedy.org>.

## Prescription Drugs

- **The Medicine Program** assists people to enroll in one or more of the many patient assistance programs that provide prescription medicine free-of-charge to those in need. Patients must meet the sponsor's criteria. The program is conducted in cooperation with the patient's doctor. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4182, Poplar Bluff, MO 63902-4182. Telephone: 1-866-694-3893. E-mail: [help@themedicineprogram.com](mailto:help@themedicineprogram.com). Website: <http://www.themedicineprogram.com>.
- **Partnership for Prescription Assistance** offers a single point of access to more than 475 public and private patient assistance programs, including more than 150 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies. Telephone: 1-888-477-2669. Website: <https://www.pparx.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, or African Americans age 50 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/states.asp>.

*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.*



National Eye Institute  
National Institutes of Health  
2020 Vision Place  
Bethesda, MD 20892–3655  
(301)496–5248  
[www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)



Last Reviewed on 07/05/09