



# Your Eyes

SEPTEMBER 2023



TODAY

## The Aging Eye – What to Know and Do

September is **Healthy Aging Month**, a time to raise awareness of older adult's physical and mental health and ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This is also a great time to talk about changes to our eyes as we age.

Some changes to our sight are normal – most will need reading or prescription glasses as we age. And we need more light as we age. Additionally, if you live long enough, you will likely get cataracts. Cataract surgery is readily available and is widely recognized as safe.

However, our risk for some eye diseases and conditions increases as we age. These include:

- **Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)** – the part of your retina (in the back of the eye) responsible for central vision, the macula, becomes damaged. This leads to loss of central vision common for reading and driving.

(Continued on page 2)

**Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington®**  
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**(202) 234-1010 | [youreyes.org](http://youreyes.org) | Facebook & Instagram: @youreyesdc**

# The Aging Eye – What to Know and Do

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(Continued from page 1)

- **Diabetic Retinopathy** – an eye condition that can cause vision loss and blindness in people who have diabetes. It affects blood vessels in the retina (the light-sensitive layer of tissue in the back of your eye).
- **Glaucoma** – a group of eye diseases that damages the optic nerve in the back of your eye. This damage causes permanent vision loss. Damage usually happens slowly over a long period, so without regular eye exams, it is difficult to notice until you have lost most of your vision.

**Ways to keep your eyes healthy at any age:**

- **Get an annual, dilated eye exam** – it's the only way to catch eye diseases and conditions before permanent vision loss occurs. And it is an important tool to manage current conditions as well!
- **Maintain a healthy diet and regular exercise.** Dark, leafy greens, omega-3 fatty acids, and fruits and vegetables are essential for eye health. Maintaining a healthy weight and heart are also important!
- **Know your risk factors.** Having a family history of eye disease puts you at higher risk. Talk to your doctor about your family's history of eye conditions.

- **Quit smoking, or don't start smoking.** Talk with your doctor about ways to quit. Find more resources to help you stop smoking at [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov).
- **If you have diabetes, manage it – stay physically active, eat healthy, and take your medicine.**
- **Protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays.** Wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim when you spend time outside. When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones blocking out 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B radiation.
- **Wear protective eyewear.** Wear protective eyewear such as goggles, safety glasses, face shields, and eye guards when working around the home. Most protective eyewear lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is ten times stronger than other plastics.
- **If spending a lot of time using digital devices, give yourself eye breaks.** Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This will help with eye strain.

It's time to make your vision a health priority. Even if you are not experiencing vision problems, it is still important to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Early detection and treatment can help save your sight.

Speak to your doctor for more information, or visit <http://nei.nih.gov>. Call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444 to speak with a Resource Navigator.

# Calendar of Events

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

To register for an event, call (301) 951-4444 at least 24 hours prior to the event.

**TUE  
12**

## **Healthy Aging and Your Eyes**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Low Vision Support Group**

One in six Americans over 65 has a vision impairment that cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. Join **Kiah McSwain, M.D., Washington National Eye Center Ophthalmology Resident**, to learn about the different aging eye conditions and what you can do.

Hosted by **Washington National Eye Center**.

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**TUE  
12**

## **Stargardt's Network Virtual Happy Hour**

**6 p.m. – 7 p.m. • Stargardt's Network**

**Special Guest: Samuel Seavey, The Blind Life**

Sam Seavey is the founder and creator of **The Blind Life** YouTube channel. With over 50,000 subscribers, Sam offers tips for managing daily tasks, reviews assistive devices, and hosts informative interviews. Join us to learn about his journey, what he does, and great tips to live your best life!

Hosted by **Prevention of Blindness Society**.

# SEPTEMBER 2023 (continued)

To register for an event, call (301) 951-4444 at least 24 hours prior to the event.

**TUE  
19**

## **Introduction to BlindShell Cell Phone**

**1 p.m. – 2 p.m. • Tech Talk Tuesdays**

**Guest Speaker: Diane Ducharme, BlindShell USA**

The BlindShell Cell Phone is an accessible cell phone designed for people with vision loss. Join us!

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**WED  
20**

## **Low Vision and POB Updates**

### **Low Vision Town Hall Meeting**

**11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Special Event**

Hear from **Suleiman Alibhai, OD**, a low vision optometrist, and **Sean Curry, MPH**, program director at the Prevention of Blindness Society, about the latest updates in vision rehabilitation and event programming. Call (301) 951-4444 to register.

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**THU  
28**

## **Falls Prevention – Orientation and Mobility**

**12 p.m. – 1 p.m. • Vision Resource Group**

Join guests **Sharon Payne, COMS**, and **Dorlyn Carter**, to learn about how orientation and mobility training can help you regain movement independence.

To RSVP, call (301) 656-2797.

**Friendship Heights Village Center**

**4433 South Park Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD**

# Living with Low Vision

## Audio Description at the Movie Theater

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By Tara Aziz

Going to the movie theater always brought me great joy. However, I had not been to one for years... until last week!

The theater's website showed "AD CC" – meaning this movie had audio description and closed captioning available.

I decided to try audio description! The theater staff gave me a headset at the counter, which I turned on when the movie started. This amazing tool allowed me to hear a clear description of the visual content I could not see. The description was given while there was no dialogue in the movie. Professional narrators described the scene, the gestures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues.

By law, movie theatres must provide these accommodations for people with vision impairment. However, plan and look at showing options, as not all showings offer this service.

Audio description gives me the independence to follow the movie without someone whispering details in my ear and bothering those around us. Go out and enjoy a movie - with a loved one or even by yourself!

Call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444 for more information.

# Resource of the Month

## National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled

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The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), Library of Congress, administers a free national library program that provides braille and recorded materials to people who cannot see regular print.

NLS offers free audiobooks and magazines in two formats:

- 1. Talking Books Player** - A free playing machine (approximately the size of a lunch box) and order books through the mail. Books come in easy-to-handle cartridges. The tactile player has large buttons that make the device easy to use.
- 3. Braille and Audio Recording Download (BARD) App** - Delivers free braille and talking books to your smartphone or tablet. The app allows instant download for thousands of titles.

While this program is free, sign-up is required. Registration is easy via a printed form that a doctor, therapist, counselor, or librarian can fill out.

To sign-up, visit or call your local library. Call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444 to learn more.

**SEPTEMBER 2023** (continued)

**SUN  
30**

**Janet Morrison Memorial Low Vision  
Symposium and Device Exhibition**

**12 p.m. – 1 p.m. • Special Virtual Event**

Tune in to a virtual conference and hear from different low-vision aid and device vendors who will demonstrate their products and applications. Each person's vision is different, so this is a great chance to learn about the various aids that may be useful for you! POB's Low Vision Resource Center will also attend to demonstrate what we can do to help. To RSVP, call Sean at (202) 234-1010, ext. 233, or email [scurry@youreyes.org](mailto:scurry@youreyes.org).

To also start receiving an electronic copy of this newsletter,  
please email [communications@youreyes.org](mailto:communications@youreyes.org).

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For the Blind or  
Handicapped

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