

BETTER VISION FOR SENIORS: A public health imperative

As people age, the normal function of the eye tissue deteriorates. 1 in 9 Canadians develop irreversible vision loss by age 65, and 1 in 4 Canadians develop irreversible vision loss by age 75.¹ The four most common causes of age-related blindness are:

- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Macular degeneration
- Diabetic retinopathy



IMPACT of vision loss among seniors

Vision loss has a significant impact on the quality of life of seniors.² Compared to people of the same age without vision problems, people with vision loss:

- Have four times as many hip fractures.
- Are admitted to nursing homes three years earlier.
- Experience three times the incidence of depression.
- Experience twice the number of falls.
- Have double the mortality rate.

There is an emerging vision crisis in Canada. The population of Canadians 65 and older is expected to double to 9.2M in the next 25 years.³ The social and financial pressure this demographic shift places on health care makes better vision for seniors a public health imperative.

Eye health and vision care are essential to healthy aging and to facilitate the contributions seniors make to their families, communities, workplaces, and society. Preventive services are key to helping aging Canadians maintain healthy eyes and vision.



SWIFT ACTION REQUIRED to address eye health and vision loss among seniors

- Build a pan-Canadian Framework for Action, coordinated by a Vision Desk at PHAC, that:
 - Is patient-centered and ensures access to the right eye health provider at the right time.
 - Promotes national vision health guidelines including an annual, comprehensive in-person eye exam for seniors.
 - Includes eye health as an essential aspect of senior strategies.
 - Approaches eye health as a population health priority, and encourages its integration into senior's preventive health care routines.
- Educate the public by promoting the value of comprehensive eye exams to prevent vision loss and promote eye health through a public awareness campaign.
- Fund research on healthy aging that incorporates eye health and vision care.

REFERENCES >

