

Focus on Eye Health and Culturally Diverse Populations



- 2 out of 3 Americans don't know that their ethnicity is a risk factor for developing eye health issues.
- Less than 40 percent of Americans scheduled an eye exam within the past year.
- Ethnic populations are less likely to understand the importance of year-round ultraviolet (UV) eye protection.

Source: Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. in April, 2011 by Wakefield Research

For the first time, the number of ethnic births in the United States is outnumbering white births – meaning ethnic minorities are quickly on their way to becoming the majority. As culturally diverse groups continue to make up a larger portion of our nation's population, it is becoming more important than ever to ensure diversity in all health communications and messages.

Many ethnic groups are **more likely to develop certain eye and overall health issues**, as well as related vision problems. In its 2012 "Vision Problems in the U.S." report, Prevent Blindness America identified a significant increase in vision impairment and blindness among older Americans over the past decade – including an 89 percent spike in diabetic eye disease. While this increase results from a national diabetes epidemic in general, it is also likely connected to the increase of ethnic populations, who are at higher risk for the disease.

Despite their higher risks for many eye health issues, research suggests that ethnic groups have **lower awareness of the need for preventive care**, and often **less access to receiving comprehensive eye care**. Adding to the mix, **cultural and language barriers** can further stand in the way of ethnic populations receiving adequate eye care and treatment.

Government agencies, policymakers, organization leaders and patient advocates can and should play a role in ensuring that those who are more likely to develop eye health issues are being educated about their risks and are taking steps to promote their eye health – including getting regular eye exams and wearing the right eyewear to protect and enhance their vision. Outreach to these groups should not only reflect unique eye health needs, but also should include culturally appropriate and sensitive messages for each audience. To alleviate language barriers and show respect for individual cultures, educational content should also be available in various languages. Consider that more than 70 percent of Hispanics and Asian Americans speak another language at home, with most preferring access to bilingual materials.¹

While there are many ways to promote eye health among culturally diverse populations, the first step is to understand what the main risks and needs are for each population. A number of resources are available to help you learn more.

- **HealthySightForLife.org** – The Transitions Healthy Sight for Life™ Fund provides eye health education and resources in both English and Spanish. A healthy sight risk assessment allows users to enter their age and ethnicity to learn more about their risks.
- **MyMulticulturalToolkit.org** – Supported by Transitions Optical, My Multicultural Toolkit provides information about the changing landscape of America and access to free eye health resources to share with culturally diverse consumers.
- **NEI.NIH.gov/NEHEP** – The National Eye Health Education Program aims to ensure that vision is a health priority by translating eye and vision research into public and professional education programs. Resources are available in both English and Spanish.
- **PreventBlindness.org** – Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Consumer eye health education and resources are available in English and Spanish.
- **PreventBlindness.org/VisionProblems** – Learn more about the increasing prevalence of adult vision impairment and age-related eye disease in America.

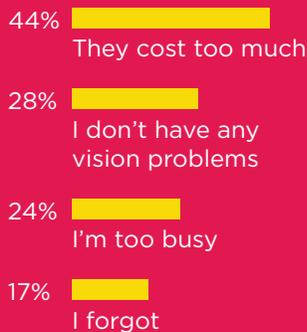
¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.





Focus on Eye Health: African Americans

Why Aren't African Americans Scheduling Eye Exams?



Source: Survey of 1,007 consumers conducted by Wakefield Research on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. in 2011

African Americans comprise the second-largest ethnic minority group in the United States, making them an important focus for consumer eye health education.

African Americans have among the highest risks for developing eye health issues, but unfortunately, they may not be getting the care that they need. In fact, just 37 percent of African Americans had an annual eye exam within the past year, with reasons for not scheduling ranging from cost, to being too busy, to not recognizing the value of an eye exam because they weren't experiencing problems with their vision.¹

Additionally, despite being at higher risk for eye diseases that can be caused or worsened by UV rays - including cataract and diabetic retinopathy - African Americans are the most likely demographic group to do nothing to protect their eyes from the sun¹, with just 7.5 percent understanding that UV rays can damage their eyes.²

These low awareness levels reinforce an urgent need to make eye health education within African American communities a national priority.

Common Eye Health Issues

Cataract - Cataract is the clouding of the eye's naturally clear lens. African Americans are 1.5 times more at risk for developing cataract compared to the general population, and are five times more likely to develop related blindness. Additional risk factors for cataract include age, gender (more common among women) and cumulative UV exposure.³

Glaucoma - Glaucoma causes gradual degeneration of the cells that make up the optic nerve, leading to vision loss. It is more common with age. African Americans are five times more likely than whites to develop glaucoma and four times more likely to suffer related blindness.³

Diabetes - African American adults are twice as likely as non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes, and are also twice as likely to develop and die from diabetes-related complications.⁴ Diabetes can lead to serious vision problems, including diabetic retinopathy. Since signs of diabetes can be seen in the eye, getting regular eye exams is one of the best ways to prevent further damage to the body and eye.

Hypertension - African Americans are significantly more likely to have high blood pressure, yet less likely to have it under control.⁵ Untreated, hypertension can lead to serious vision problems and even vision loss. Signs of hypertension can sometimes be seen in the eye, making regular eye exams important for disease management.

HIV/AIDS - African Americans face the most severe burden of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) of all racial and ethnic groups. Despite representing only 14 percent of the U.S. population in 2009, African Americans accounted for 44 percent of all new HIV infections that year.⁶ HIV/AIDS can lead to retinal detachment and blindness within two to six months.

¹ Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. in April, 2011 by Wakefield Research.

² Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. from March 9-13, 2006 by ICR, Media, Pa.

³ Livingston, Ivor Lensworth, et al. *Ophthalmic Disease in Blacks: Prospects for Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health in the Public Health Context*. Praeger Handbook of Black American Health, Policies and Issues Behind Disparities in Health, Volume I.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet.

⁵ Roger VL, Go AS, Lloyd-Jones DM, et al. *Heart disease and stroke statistics—2012 update: a report from the American Heart Association*. Circulation. Epub 2011 Dec 15.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *HIV Among African Americans*, November 2011.



Focus on Eye Health: Asian Americans

Today, Asian Americans make up the fastest-growing minority demographic group in the United States – and also represent an important focus for consumer eye health education.

In addition to being at higher risk for various vision problems and eye health issues, Asian Americans face many obstacles to receiving adequate eye care, ranging from low awareness levels to cultural and language barriers. Asian Americans are more likely than the general population to skip their routine eye exam because they aren't having any vision problems, and are the most likely to believe that wearing glasses will make their vision get worse.

When it comes to sun protection, Asian Americans can also benefit from targeted education efforts. They are the most likely to believe that UV eye protection is only important during the spring and summer months. At the same time, Asian Americans are the most likely to choose eyewear because it protects their eye health – suggesting that with the right education, they will be more likely to ask for eyewear that protects their eyes from the sun.¹

Common Eye Health Issues

Myopia – Myopia, or trouble seeing far away, affects upwards of 80 percent of Asian Americans. While myopia can usually be treated easily with eyewear, 40 percent of Asian Americans don't see their eye doctor when experiencing this problem – and an additional 40 percent believe that wearing glasses will make their vision get worse.¹

Glaucoma – Asian Americans are more likely than the general population to develop glaucoma, with new research showing rates similar to Hispanic populations. Rates of narrow-angle glaucoma – which occurs when excess fluid becomes blocked and pressure builds up in the eye – are higher in Asian Americans than any other racial group, and are particularly high among Chinese and Vietnamese Americans. Other forms of glaucoma, including normal-tension glaucoma and open-angle glaucoma, are higher among Japanese Americans.²

Diabetes – Asian Americans are more likely than whites to develop type 2 diabetes – but because they are less likely to be overweight, they may not be diagnosed as early as they could be.³ Diabetes can lead to serious vision problems, including diabetic retinopathy. Since signs of diabetes can be seen in the eye, getting regular eye exams is one of the best ways to prevent further damage to the body and eye.

Tuberculosis – The world's leading infectious cause of death, Tuberculosis (TB) is 13 times more common among Asian Americans. Over time, TB can lead to a number of serious complications throughout the body and eye. Untreated, these problems can lead to permanent vision loss or blindness.⁴



77% Of Asian Americans Speak Another Language At Home

Making available bilingual and in-language education materials can help to ensure greater access to eye health education. Consider making content available in the most common languages, including Chinese (various dialects), Vietnamese, Tagalog and Korean.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



- ¹ Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. in April, 2011 by Wakefield Research.
- ² Study funded by the National Eye Institute. American Academy of Ophthalmology, Ophthalmology, 2011.
- ³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2006 National Healthcare Disparities Report.



Focus on Eye Health: Hispanic Americans

Hispanics make up the largest ethnic minority group in the United States – comprising more than 16 percent of today’s population and an estimated 30 percent by the year 2050. Consumer eye health education efforts are critical in ensuring the health and well-being of this group.

Hispanics have among the highest risks for developing eye health issues, but many aren’t taking the right steps to protect their vision. Just 41 percent of Hispanics visited their eye doctor within the past year, and only 34 percent of Hispanic parents took their children – the lowest of all demographic groups. Main reasons for not scheduling an appointment included cost, being too busy and not experiencing any vision problems.¹

Additionally, Hispanics have among the lowest awareness levels of the need for UV eye protection, with just 3.7 percent recognizing that the sun can damage their eyes.² This is alarming, considering Hispanics are more likely to develop UV-related eye diseases including cataract, diabetic retinopathy and pterygia.

Common Eye Health Issues

Cataract – Cataract is the clouding of the eye’s naturally clear lens. The leading cause of blindness worldwide, cataract is also more common among Hispanics. Additional risk factors for cataract include age, gender (more common among women) and cumulative UV exposure.

Glaucoma – Often known as the silent thief of sight – because it leads to permanent vision loss, often without warning – glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among Hispanics. Studies suggest that open-angle glaucoma affects Hispanics at comparable rates to African Americans, and at much higher rates compared to non-Hispanic whites.³

Pterygia – A pterygium is a non-cancerous growth of the clear, thin tissue over the white part of the eye. While the cause is unknown, prevalence is significantly higher among Hispanic Americans. Other risk factors include extended exposure to UV and wind.

Diabetes – Diabetes disproportionately affects Hispanics in the U.S. – and Hispanics are more likely to get it at an earlier age.⁴ Diabetes can lead to serious vision problems, including diabetic retinopathy. Since signs of diabetes can be seen in the eye, getting regular eye exams is one of the best ways to prevent further damage to the body and eye.

Hypertension – While high blood pressure is more common among Hispanics, as many as half don’t know they have it.⁴ Over time, hypertension can lead to serious vision problems or blindness. Because signs of hypertension are visible in the eye, regular eye exams are critical in overall health management.



70% Of Hispanics Speak Spanish At Home

While many Hispanics speak English well, most also speak at least some Spanish at home, work or school. Making available bilingual and in-language education materials can help to promote eye health within Hispanic communities, while showing respect for the Hispanic culture.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



¹ Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. in April, 2011 by Wakefield Research.

² Survey conducted on behalf of Transitions Optical, Inc. from March 9-13, 2006 by ICR, Media, Pa.

³ American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Glaucoma Society Joint Comments on: Comparative Effectiveness of Screening for Glaucoma, October 2011.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet.