




The Nexus Between Vision Loss and Falls



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not only lead to a
fall, falls are also the
leading cause of eye injury.*

An estimated 3.6 million Ohioans have vision problems and the number of Ohio residents with impaired vision, including blindness, could double in the next three decades. Data from the 2012 Vision Problems in the U.S. report indicate alarming increases in the four leading causes of vision loss: age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, open-angle glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

The economic impact of vision problems in Ohio is \$5.4 billion annually in both direct and indirect costs.

Age-related eye diseases increase the likelihood of debilitating falls by older Ohioans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ohioans age 65 and older who have an age-related eye disease were 51.7 percent more likely to have fallen than peers without an eye disease. This is the sixth highest rate of falls among all states. Of those who fall, 20 to 30 percent suffer moderate to severe injuries that make it hard for them to get around or live independently. Falling once doubles the chances of falling again, threatening the health and independence of older adults and likely resulting in higher medical costs.

Eye diseases can not only lead to a fall, falls are the leading cause of eye injury, according to research from the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Falls are an epidemic among our elders and are the number one cause of injuries leading to ER visits, hospital stays and deaths in Ohioans age 65-plus. An older Ohioan falls every minute on average, resulting in an injury every five minutes, an emergency department visit every six minutes, two hospitalizations each hour and three deaths each day. The number of fatal falls among older Ohioans increased more than 202 percent from 2000-2015. The total estimated cost of falls (medical costs, work loss, etc.) is \$1.9 billion annually in Ohio.

Sources:

The Cost of Vision Problems: The Economic Burden of Vision Loss and Eye Disorders in the United States, Prevent Blindness America, June 2013

Economic Trends in Eye-Related Hospitalizations, 119th annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, Nov. 2015

Ohio Department of Health

Together We Can Reduce Vision Loss and Falls

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists “having yearly eye exams” for older Americans among its recommended fall prevention strategies. However, a large number of people who have problems with their eyesight don’t visit eye doctors because of the cost or because they don’t have health insurance that covers eye care, according to a 2011 CDC survey. The survey also showed that others don’t get regular eye exams because they don’t think they have eye problems or have no transportation to get to their offices.

Ohio’s Aging Eye Public Private Partnership, the Ohio Department of Aging, Prevent Blindness and our many partners are working together to help older Ohioans access vision care and prevent falls.

STEADY U Ohio and A Matter of Balance



STEADY U Ohio is an intensive, statewide, community-driven falls prevention initiative, supported by Ohio government and state business partners, to ensure that every county, every community and every Ohioan knows how they can prevent falls.

The Ohio Department of Aging and STEADY U partners collaborate to offer A Matter of Balance, a community-based, award-winning program available in all 88 Ohio counties. The program consists of small-group workshops that help participants learn to recognize and address various factors in their lifestyle that may be increasing their risk of falling, including a fear of falling. Through group discussion, problem-solving activities, assertiveness training, exercise and skill building, participants are empowered to:

- View falls as something they can control;
- Set goals and increase their activity levels;
- Make changes around their homes to reduce falls risks; and
- Exercise to increase strength and balance.

Workshop leaders are not health professionals, but people who have made a commitment to stay falls-free and have been specially trained to help others maintain healthy, active lifestyles free from falls and falls-related injuries.

For more information about STEADY U and A Matter of Balance, please visit www.steadyu.ohio.gov or call **1-866-243-5678** to be connected to the area agency on aging serving your community.



Adult Vision Screening Training Program

According to the National Commission on Prevention Priorities, vision screening is one of the 25 health services that offers the greatest potential for preventing future disease, as well as for improving quality of life.

Prevent Blindness trains individuals from organizations to offer vision screening with their other programming to assist in the early identification of vision problems and provide eye health education.

After completing the Adult Vision Screening Training Program, individuals will be able to:

- Perform near and distance visual acuity screenings,
- Educate people about aging-related eye diseases and disorders, and
- Assist in setting up referrals.

Upon successful completion of the training, participants will be nationally certified to provide vision screenings for three years.

The Department of Aging and Prevent Blindness are cross-training new A Matter of Balance coaches in the Adult Vision Screening Training Program and encouraging current coaches to take the training to add this process to the falls prevention curriculum. For additional information on Adult Vision Screening Training, please call Prevent Blindness at **1-800-301-2020, ext. 112** or email info@pbOhio.org.

The Ohio Department of Aging and our STEADY U partners – state agencies, community and business leaders, as well as service providers – are working to prevent falls, one step at a time.



Ohio’s Aging Eye Public Private Partnership c/o Prevent Blindness
1-800-301-2020 (toll-free) ▪ 1-614-464-2020 (office) ▪ 1-614-481-9670 (fax)
ohio.preventblindness.org/ohios-aging-eye-public-private-partnership