Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry (ZBCHM)

Gift of Sight

Eye Health, Vision Wellness, Advocacy, and Resource Guide

— Final —

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Prepared as an educational resource guide to support awareness, prevention, early intervention, advocacy, and wellness across the lifespan.

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The Gift of Sight: Eye Health, Vision Wellness, Advocacy, and Resource Guide

Prepared by the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry (ZBCHM), Washington, DC

www.ziondc.org

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Educational and Medical Disclaimer

This guide is for educational, spiritual, and community awareness purposes only. It is intended to promote general understanding of eye health, vision wellness, prevention, early detection, advocacy, accessibility tools, caregiver support, and some available resources.

This guide is not medical advice and is not a substitute for professional care, diagnosis, treatment, or guidance from a physician, ophthalmologist, optometrist, primary care provider, or other qualified healthcare professional.

Always consult your healthcare provider regarding questions about your vision, eye health, symptoms, medications, treatment options, surgery, or follow-up care. For sudden vision loss, severe eye pain, flashes of light, new floaters, eye injury, chemical exposure, double vision, or other urgent symptoms, seek medical attention immediately or call 911.

Zion Baptist Church offers spiritual support, education, fellowship, and community care, but does not provide licensed medical services, diagnose eye conditions, prescribe treatment, or guarantee outcomes from any resource or service mentioned in this guide.

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Foreword

The Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry (ZBCHM) — one of the many ministries at the historic Zion Baptist Church in Washington, DC — is pleased to share The Gift of Sight: Eye Health, Vision Wellness, Advocacy, and Resource Guide. This guide was developed as a community education tool for individuals, families, caregivers, churches, other organizations, and health ministries who want to learn more about eye health and vision wellness across the lifespan. The information included was drawn from trusted public health and medical education resources to provide you with a helpful overview of the eye and how to protect your vision. Please note that your personal health care providers should be consulted regarding your personal situation, because they alone have the full picture of your health history and individual needs. This guide is designed to help educate and inform you — to give you a foundation of knowledge and help you prepare thoughtful questions for your health care providers. It is our hope that this resource will help you become a more confident and active partner in managing your eye health and the health of those you love.

Protecting our vision is part of caring for the whole person. Our eyes help us to read, learn, work, drive, worship, recognize faces, enjoy God's creations, and stay connected with others. When vision changes, the impact may be physical, emotional, psychological, social, financial, and spiritual. For this reason, eye health must include prevention, early detection/intervention, treatment, advocacy, technology, caregiver support, and hope.

This guide covers a wide range of topics, including how the eye works, key questions to ask your provider, common eye disorders, chronic diseases that affect vision, nutrition, safety, mental health, accessibility tools, advocacy, and available resources. It also includes a special tribute to Brother Mac, a beloved member of our church and Health Ministry family who was confronted with visual challenges, and a few words of encouragement from one of our Seasoned Saints, Sister Tommye Moore, also a member of the Health Ministry as well as several other ministries in our church. She is a retired educator and school counselor.

ZBCHM encourages every reader to use this guide as a starting point for learning, asking questions, seeking professional care, and advocating for yourself and those you love.

Theme Scripture for this Guide:

Psalm 146:8 (KJV)

"The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous."

This verse establishes the heart of this guide. It reminds readers that God is compassionate, present, and concerned about those experiencing vision challenges. It sets a tone of hope from the very beginning.

Our Responsibility

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (KJV)

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you... therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

This scripture reminds us why caring for our eyes is part of caring for our bodies that God has entrusted to us.

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized to serve a wide range of readers. You do not need to read it from beginning to end. Use the Table of Contents to go directly to the sections most helpful to you.

If you are new to eye health topics, start with Sections 1–3 for an overview of how the eye works and how vision changes across life.

If you or a loved one has a chronic illness such as diabetes or high blood pressure, see Sections 6 and 7 on common eye disorders and how chronic diseases affect vision.

If you are a caregiver or family member supporting someone with vision loss, focus on Sections 11–13 and Appendix E for emotional support, advocacy, and practical caregiving guidance.

If you want to learn about helpful technology and tools, go to Sections 14 and 17 and Appendix D.

If you are preparing for an eye appointment, turn to Section 19 for a ready-to-use list of questions and a place to record your doctor's instructions.

If you are looking for inspiration and encouragement, read the personal stories of Sister Tommye Moore (Section 15) and the tribute to Brother Mac (Section 16).

ZBCHM encourages you to take this guide at your own pace, share it with family and friends, and return to it as your needs change. You are never alone on this journey.

Why This Guide Was Created

Every educational resource has a story.

This guide was inspired by two faithful members of Zion Baptist Church in Washington, DC whose journeys reminded us that vision health is about much more than eyesight. It is about preserving independence, maintaining dignity, strengthening faith, supporting caregivers, embracing technology, and ensuring that no one faces vision loss alone.

Brother Mac's experience reminded us of the challenges that often accompany progressive vision loss and the importance of learning about resources before they are urgently needed.

Sister Tommye Moore's journey reminds us that early detection, regular eye care, faith, perseverance, and a positive spirit can help individuals continue living active, meaningful lives despite significant eye disease.

Together, their stories became the inspiration for this guide and our desire to help others protect the precious gift of sight.

Section 1- The Gift of Sight: A Lifelong Journey

Vision is one of God's most remarkable gifts. Sight begins in the womb shortly after conception, as the eyes and visual pathways start to form during the earliest stages of life. From an infant's first glimpse of a parent's face, through childhood learning, adulthood responsibilities, and the wisdom of older age, our eyes help us connect with the world around us.

Throughout the lifespan, our visual needs and challenges change. Healthy vision supports learning in children and the adolescent years, productivity in adults, independence in older adults, and quality of life at every age. Because our eyes are constantly changing, protecting and preserving vision requires us to engage in a prevention and early intervention through regular eye examinations, healthy lifestyle choices, early detection of eye diseases, and prompt treatment when problems arise.

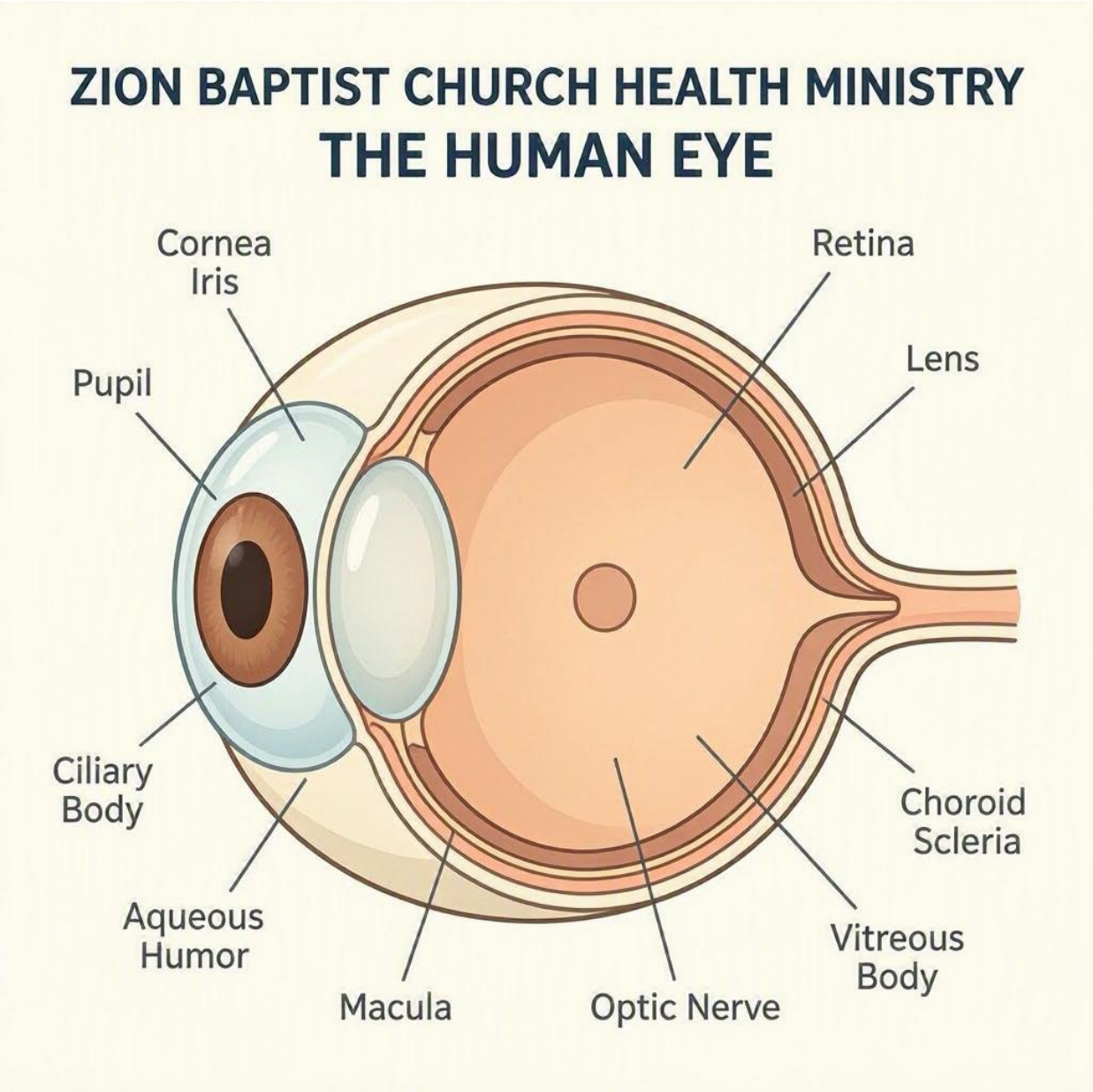
This journey of sight begins before birth and continues throughout the entire course of our lives. By understanding how vision develops, and changes, we can be better positioned to appreciate the precious gift of sight and take steps to preserve it for ourselves, our loved ones, and future generations.

Scripture Reflection: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" — Matthew 6:22–23 (KJV)

This reminds us that caring for our eyes is not only a health responsibility but also a way of honoring one of the many gifts God has entrusted to us.

Section 2 - Understanding the Eye and How Vision Works

The human eye is an amazing part of the human body that allows us to gather information about the world around us. Working together with the brain, the eye receives light, focuses it, and transforms it into messages that the brain interprets as images. When light enters the eye through the cornea and pupil, it is focused by the lens onto the retina. The retina then sends signals through the optic nerve to the brain, where those signals are translated into the people, places, colors, and objects we see every day. Although this process occurs in a fraction of a second, it involves many structures working together in remarkable harmony.



"Human Eye Cross-Section — Created with Microsoft Copilot (AI-generated) for [ZION BAPTIST CHURCH HEALTH MINISTRY. " Illustration showing Cornea, Pupil, Iris, Lens, Retina, and Optic Nerve.

Key Parts of the Eye

Part of the Eye	What It Does
Cornea	Clear, dome-shaped front layer that helps bend and focus light.
Pupil	Dark opening in the center of the eye that allows light to enter.
Iris	Colored part of the eye that changes the size of the pupil and controls how much light enters.
Lens	Clear structure that focuses light, similar to the lens of a camera.

Part of the Eye	What It Does
Retina	Light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that changes light into signals.
Optic Nerve	Messenger that carries visual signals from the retina to the brain.
Brain	Interprets signals and helps us understand what we are seeing.

Section 3- How Vision Changes Across the Lifespan

Our eyes change throughout our lives, just like the rest of our bodies. Some changes are expected with aging, while others may require medical attention. Knowing what to expect can help individuals and families seek care early.

Infants and Children

- Babies are born with developing vision.
- Vision improves rapidly during the first few years of life.
- Children learn to focus, track objects, and judge distance.
- Early eye exams can help detect problems such as lazy eye, crossed eyes, or the need for glasses. Children should have their first eye exam by age three by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, not merely a screening using a standardized eye chart.

Teenagers and Young Adults

- Vision is often at its sharpest and healthiest.
- Nearsightedness may develop during school years.
- Increased screen time may lead to eye strain, dry eyes, and headaches.

Adults Ages 40-60

- Many people begin noticing changes around age 40.
- The lens becomes less flexible, making it harder to focus on close objects.
- This condition is called presbyopia and often leads to the need for reading glasses.
- Night vision may become less sharp, and glare from headlights may become more bothersome.

Older Adults Ages 60 and Older

- Normal aging may cause difficulty focusing, seeing in low light, and adjusting between bright and dark spaces.
- Dry eyes may become more common.
- The risk increases for cataracts, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy.

ZBCHM take-home message: Regular eye examinations, chronic disease control, healthy eating, sun protection, and prompt attention to vision changes can help protect sight at every age.

Section 4- Newborn Eye Health and Vitamin K

A newborn's eyes continue to develop after birth. Although babies can see at birth, their vision is blurry and they see best at about 8 to 12 inches, which is about the distance to a parent's face while being held.

- Babies begin to focus better during the first few months.
- They start tracking moving objects.
- They begin recognizing familiar faces.
- Their eye coordination improves over time.

Vitamin K at Birth

Soon after birth, most newborns receive a Vitamin K injection in the thigh. Vitamin K helps the blood clot properly. Newborns naturally have very low Vitamin K levels because very little Vitamin K crosses the placenta, babies have limited stored Vitamin K, and breast milk contains only small amounts of Vitamin K.

Without enough Vitamin K, babies can develop Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding, a rare but serious condition that can cause bleeding in the brain, intestines, skin, and other organs. Although Vitamin K is not an eye medicine, severe Vitamin K deficiency can sometimes cause bleeding in the retina or other parts of the eye. By preventing dangerous bleeding throughout the body, Vitamin K helps protect the newborn's overall health, including the eyes and brain.

Other Newborn Eye Care

In many hospitals, newborns also receive antibiotic eye ointment shortly after birth to help prevent serious eye infections that may be passed during delivery.

Signs Parents Should Report

- No response to light by 2 to 3 months
- Constant eye discharge or redness
- Cloudy-looking eyes
- One eye that consistently turns inward or outward
- No eye contact by a few months of age

Section 5- Children's Eye Health

A child's vision plays an important role in learning, development, safety, and overall well-being. Healthy vision helps children read, write, play sports, recognize faces, and explore the world around them.

How Children's Eyes Develop

Babies are not born with fully developed vision. During the first few years of life, the eyes and brain work together to learn how to see clearly. Vision continues to improve throughout childhood.

Signs of Possible Vision Problems

- Frequent eye rubbing
- Squinting
- Sitting too close to the television
- Holding books or devices very close to the face
- Complaints of headaches
- Difficulty reading
- Covering one eye to see better
- Poor hand-eye coordination
- Eyes that do not appear aligned

If any of these signs are present, an eye examination is recommended.

Common Eye Problems in Children

Nearsightedness (Myopia): Children can see objects up close but have difficulty seeing things far away.

Farsightedness (Hyperopia): Children may have trouble focusing on nearby objects.

Astigmatism: The eye's shape causes blurred or distorted vision.

Amblyopia (Lazy Eye): One eye does not develop normal vision. Early treatment can often improve vision.

Strabismus (Crossed Eyes): The eyes do not point in the same direction. Treatment is most effective when started early.

Screen Time and Children's Eyes

Too much screen time can contribute to eye strain, dry eyes, headaches, and fatigue. The 20-20-20 rule can help: every 20 minutes, look at something about 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

Protecting Children's Vision

- Schedule regular eye exams.
- Encourage outdoor play.
- Limit excessive screen time.
- Provide healthy foods rich in vitamins A, C, and E.
- Ensure children wear protective eyewear during sports and activities.
- Teach children not to rub their eyes excessively.

Section 6- Common Eye Disorders: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

Many eye disorders can be managed or treated when they are detected early. Some eye disorders are rare such as --

Familial Exudative Vitreoretinopathy (FEVR) is a rare inherited condition in which the blood vessels that supply the retina do not develop properly before birth. In some cases, these abnormal blood vessels can leak fluid into the eye, which may cloud or distort a child's vision. This weakens the structure of the eye and increases the risk of retinal

detachment. FEVR is just one example of a congenital eye condition that may affect a child from birth — and it highlights the importance of parents staying observant and working closely with their health care providers to detect and address vision problems as early as possible.

The table below provides a simple overview of some common eye disorders. It is not intended for self-diagnosis, but to give you some insight of things you should be aware of and bring to the attention of your healthcare providers.

Eye Disorder	What It Is	Common Causes/Risk Factors	Common Symptoms	Treatment/Management
Nearsightedness (Myopia)	Difficulty seeing distant objects clearly.	Eye grows too long or cornea is too curved.	Blurry distance vision; squinting.	Glasses, contact lenses, or refractive surgery.
Farsightedness (Hyperopia)	Difficulty seeing close objects clearly.	Eye is shorter than normal.	Eyestrain, headaches, blurred near vision.	Glasses or contact lenses.
Astigmatism	Blurred or distorted vision caused by an irregularly shaped cornea.	Often present at birth.	Blurred or distorted vision at all distances.	Glasses, contact lenses, or surgery.
Presbyopia	Age-related loss of near focusing ability.	Natural aging of the lens.	Difficulty reading small print; holding items farther away.	Reading glasses, bifocals, progressive lenses, or contacts.
Cataracts	Clouding of the eye's lens.	Aging, diabetes, smoking, UV exposure, injury.	Blurry vision, glare, faded colors, poor night vision.	Cataract surgery when needed.
Glaucoma	Damage to the optic nerve, often related to increased eye pressure.	Age, family history, diabetes, high eye pressure.	Often no early symptoms; later loss of side vision.	Eye drops, laser treatment, or surgery.
Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)	Damage to the macula, the central part of the retina.	Aging, smoking, family history.	Blurred or distorted central vision.	Monitoring, lifestyle changes, vitamins for some, injections for wet AMD.
Diabetic Retinopathy	Damage to retinal blood vessels caused by diabetes.	Poorly controlled blood sugar, diabetes duration, high blood pressure.	Blurred vision, floaters, vision loss.	Blood sugar control, laser treatment, injections, surgery.
Dry Eye Disease	Eyes do not produce enough tears or tears evaporate too quickly.	Aging, medications, screen use, autoimmune diseases.	Burning, itching, redness, watery eyes.	Artificial tears, prescription drops, lifestyle changes.
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	Inflammation of the eye's outer membrane.	Viral, bacterial, or allergic causes.	Redness, discharge, itching.	Treatment depends on cause; may include drops or supportive care.
Retinal Detachment	Retina pulls away from the back of the eye.	Aging, trauma, severe nearsightedness.	Flashes of light, floaters, curtain-like shadow.	Medical emergency requiring urgent care or surgery.

If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, a family history of eye disease, or are over age 60, regular eye exams are essential - even if you think your vision is fine.

Section 7 - Eye Health and Chronic Diseases

Our eyes are connected to the rest of our body. Chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, autoimmune disorders, thyroid disease, obesity, and multiple sclerosis can affect the eyes and vision. Protecting overall health is an important part of protecting sight.

Diabetes

High blood sugar can damage the small blood vessels in the retina. Diabetes can also increase risk for cataracts and glaucoma.

Possible Eye Problems

- Diabetic retinopathy
- Diabetic macular edema
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma

What You Can Do

- Keep blood sugar under control.
- Monitor blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Have a dilated eye exam as recommended by your eye care provider.
- Report changes in vision immediately.

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

High blood pressure can damage blood vessels in the retina and may affect blood flow to the optic nerve.

Possible Eye Problems

- Hypertensive retinopathy
- Blurred vision
- Reduced blood flow to the optic nerve
- Increased risk of stroke-related vision loss

What You Can Do

- Take medications as prescribed. The right drug at the right time as prescribed.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise as able.
- Have routine eye examinations.

Heart Disease and Stroke

The eyes rely on a healthy blood supply. Circulation problems can affect vision.

Possible Eye Problems

- Sudden vision loss
- Retinal artery blockage

- Retinal vein blockage
- Vision changes after stroke

What You Can Do

- Manage cholesterol.
- Control blood pressure.
- Avoid smoking.
- Follow your healthcare provider's recommendations.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Multiple sclerosis can affect the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves.

Possible Eye Problems

- Optic neuritis
- Blurred vision
- Double vision
- Eye pain
- Difficulty seeing colors

What You Can Do

- Seek prompt evaluation for new vision symptoms.
- Follow treatment recommendations.
- Maintain regular neurological and eye care.

Autoimmune Diseases

Conditions such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome, and sarcoidosis can affect the eyes.

Possible Eye Problems

- Dry eyes
- Eye inflammation
- Pain and redness
- Sensitivity to light

What You Can Do

- Keep medical appointments.
- Use prescribed medications as ordered.
- Report new symptoms promptly, keep a daily diary or journal if needed.

Thyroid Disease

An overactive thyroid, especially Graves' disease, can affect the eyes.

Possible Eye Problems

- Bulging eyes
- Dry eyes
- Double vision
- Eye irritation

What You Can Do

- Work closely with your healthcare team.
- Have regular eye examinations and follow through with recommended care.

Obesity

Obesity increases the risk of chronic diseases that can affect vision, including diabetes and hypertension.

What You Can Do

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Stay physically active as able.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

What affects your heart, blood vessels, nerves, and immune system can also affect your eyes.

Section 8 - Warning Signs of Eye Disorders

Many eye diseases develop slowly and without pain. However, some warning signs should never be ignored. If your vision suddenly changes, do not wait; contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Blurred Vision: Difficulty seeing clearly at near or far distances; trouble reading or recognizing faces.

Sudden Vision Loss: Partial or complete loss of vision in one or both eyes. This requires immediate medical attention.

Flashes of Light: Brief flashes, sparks, the appearance of "fireflies," or streaks of light that may signal a retinal tear or retinal detachment.

New Floaters: Small spots, cobwebs, or specks drifting across your field of vision. A sudden increase should be evaluated promptly.

Eye Pain: Persistent or severe pain in or around the eye.

Redness: Red, irritated, or inflamed eyes.

Double Vision: Seeing two images of a single object.

Difficulty Seeing at Night: Trouble driving or seeing in dim light.

Sensitivity to Light: Discomfort in bright sunlight or indoor lighting.

Distorted Vision: Straight lines appear wavy or bent.

Excessive Tearing or Dryness: Eyes that constantly water or feel dry, gritty, or irritated.

Changes in Color Vision: Difficulty distinguishing colors or noticing faded colors.

Curtain or Shadow Over Vision: A curtain, veil, or shadow moving across part of your vision. This may be a retinal detachment emergency.

When to Seek Emergency Care

- Sudden vision loss
- A curtain or shadow over your vision
- Flashes of light with new floaters
- Severe eye pain
- Eye injury
- Sudden double vision
- Chemical exposure to the eye

Section 9 - Nutrition and Eye Health

Nutrition supports healthy eyes in the same way it supports the heart, brain, immune system, and overall wellness. Good nutrition cannot cure every eye disease, but it is one important step in protecting vision throughout life.

Keep your eyes healthy

There are lots of ways to keep your eyes healthy — from wearing appropriate sunglasses to eating eye-healthy foods, like salmon and kale.

Key Nutrients for Healthy Eyes

Vitamin A: Supports healthy vision, especially in low light. Sources include sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, spinach, kale, cantaloupe, and eggs.

Lutein and Zeaxanthin: Help protect the retina and macula. Sources include spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, broccoli, corn, and egg yolks.

Vitamin C: Supports healthy blood vessels and eye tissues. Sources include oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, kiwi, bell peppers, and tomatoes.

Vitamin E: Helps protect eye cells from damage. Sources include almonds, sunflower seeds, peanuts, and avocados.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Support retinal health and tear production. Sources include salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, walnuts, and flaxseed.

Zinc: Helps Vitamin A function properly and supports the retina. Sources include lean meats, seafood, beans, nuts, and whole grains.

Healthy Eating for Healthy Eyes

- Eat colorful fruits and vegetables every day.

- Include dark leafy greens several times a week.
- Eat fish rich in Omega-3 fatty acids when possible.
- Choose whole grains.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Limit excess sugar and highly processed foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Eat for your eyes: colorful fruits and vegetables, leafy greens, fish rich in Omega-3s, and good control of diabetes and blood pressure can help protect vision.

Section 10 - Eye Safety: Protecting the Gift of Sight

Many eye injuries are preventable. Eye safety matters at home, at work, during sports, while driving, and during daily activities such as cooking, cleaning, and yard work.

Eye Safety at Home

- Wear protective eyewear when using chemicals, power tools, or yard equipment.
- Read product labels carefully.
- Keep chemicals away from children.
- Never mix cleaning products unless directed.
- Wash hands before touching your eyes.

Sports and Recreation

- Wear sport-specific protective eyewear.
- Use helmets with face protection when appropriate.
- Follow safety rules and guidelines.

Workplace Safety

- Wear approved safety glasses or goggles.
- Follow workplace safety procedures.
- Use face shields when required.
- Replace damaged protective eyewear.

Sun Exposure

- Wear sunglasses that block 99-100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat outdoors.
- Remember that UV exposure occurs year-round.

Digital Devices

- Use the 20-20-20 rule.
- Blink often.
- Adjust screen brightness and text size.
- Take regular breaks.

Children's Eye Safety

- Keep sharp objects out of reach.
- Supervise play.
- Choose age-appropriate toys.
- Encourage protective eyewear during sports.
- Encourage the use of wide brim hats to protect your child's eyes
- Teach children not to point objects toward the eyes.

If an Eye Injury Occurs

- Do not rub the eye.
- Do not attempt to remove an embedded object.
- Do not apply pressure to the eye.
- Seek immediate medical attention for chemical exposure, severe pain, bleeding, injury, or sudden vision loss.

Section 11 - Mental Health, Emotional Wellness, and Vision Loss

Vision loss affects more than the eyes. It can affect independence, confidence, relationships, psychological, emotional, and mental well-being, and quality of life. Many people experience frustration, fear, sadness, loneliness, depression, or anxiety as their vision changes. These feelings are real and deserve attention. (ZBCHM has compiled a listing of mental health resources, please visit our church's website— www.ziondc.org/health).

How Vision Loss Can Affect Daily Life

- Reading
- Driving
- Using a telephone or computer
- Managing medications
- Shopping
- Preparing meals
- Interacting with your loved ones
- Attending church and community activities
- Recognizing faces
- Participating in hobbies

Common Emotional Responses

Grief and Loss: Many individuals grieve the loss of abilities they once took for granted.

Anxiety: People may worry about losing independence, falling, becoming a burden, managing finances, or future vision loss.

Depression: Symptoms may include persistent sadness, loss of interest, sleep changes, appetite changes, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, or thoughts of self-harm.

Frustration and Anger: Simple tasks may take longer and require assistance.

Loneliness and Isolation: People may withdraw because of transportation challenges, difficulty recognizing people, or fear of embarrassment.

Resources and Support

- Mental health professionals such as counselors, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists.
- Faith communities that provide fellowship, prayer, visitation, transportation assistance, and support groups.
- Vision rehabilitation services that help people regain confidence and learn adaptive skills.
- Peer support groups with others experiencing vision loss.
- Family caregiver support and education.

The greatest gift we can offer someone experiencing vision loss is not pity - it is companionship, encouragement, respect, and inclusion.

Section 12 - Advocacy Matters

Advocacy occurs at many levels: self-advocacy, family advocacy, community advocacy, and public policy advocacy. Eye health is not only about doctors and treatments. It is also about access, affordability, transportation, insurance coverage, technology, clinic hours, home-based services, and support systems.

Self-Advocacy at the Doctor's Office

- Prepare questions before the visit.
- Bring a trusted advocate, family member, or friend whenever possible.
- Ask the provider to explain the diagnosis, treatment options, risks, benefits, and follow-up plan at a level that you understand.
- Ask for information in large print, audio, or accessible electronic format if needed.
- Repeat instructions back to confirm understanding.
- Ask what symptoms require urgent attention.
- Record your appointment (with permission) if permitted by your provider.
- If a family member or support person is not available, consider bringing them into your visit through FaceTime, Zoom, or speakerphone.
- If you still have questions after leaving your appointment, call back and seek clarification

The Role of an Advocate

An advocate can serve as another set of eyes and ears. This person can help listen, take notes, ask questions, remember instructions, arrange transportation, follow up on referrals, and help the patient feel supported. Advocacy does not take away a person's voice; it helps strengthen that voice.

Family and Caregiver Advocacy

- Help loved ones schedule and keep appointments.
- Assist with transportation and medication organization.
- Support use of accessibility tools and large-print or audio resources.
- Encourage independence while offering practical help.
- Watch for changes in mood, safety, mobility, and vision.

Community and Church Advocacy

- Promote eye health education and vision screenings.
- Share trusted resources with members and families.
- Encourage members to bring advocates to medical appointments.
- Support transportation, visitation, and connection for those with vision loss.
- Make church materials accessible through large print, audio, and clear announcements.
- At Zion, materials can be found on the church's website- www.ziondc.org/health

Public Policy Advocacy

- Clinic hours that meet the needs of working adults, older adults, and caregivers.
- Insurance coverage for eye exams, glasses, low-vision devices, and vision rehabilitation.
- Transportation access for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Adequate staffing for home-based vision rehabilitation services.
- Coverage for assistive technology and training.
- Policies that support accessible public spaces, communication, and health information.

Advocacy is love in action. It helps remove barriers so people can receive the care, tools, and support they need.

Section 13 - Living Well with Vision Loss

Vision loss affects people in different ways. Some individuals experience gradual changes over time, while others face sudden or significant vision challenges. Beyond the physical effects, vision loss can impact independence, confidence, emotional well-being, and social connections. Vision loss can be frightening, but it does not mean the end of a full and meaningful life. With planning, support, adaptive technology, rehabilitation services, and faith, many individuals continue to thrive and remain active members of their families and communities. With early intervention, appropriate medical care, assistive technology, community support, and strong self-advocacy, many people continue to lead active, meaningful, and productive lives.

Accepting Change

- Acknowledge feelings of shock, anger, frustration, sadness, fear, and anxiety.
- Seek support when needed. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

Stay Connected

- Attend church services in person or virtually if needed
- Participate in multiple ministry activities.
- Join support groups or create new support groups if needed
- Get to know your neighbors
- Visit with family and friends.
- Volunteer when possible.

Learn New Skills

- Work with vision rehabilitation specialists.

- Learn medication management, home safety, adaptive reading strategies, and technology skills.

Section 14 – Technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Accessibility Tools

Technology is transforming the lives of individuals across all walks of life. Scientific advances in artificial intelligence (AI), smartphones, smart watches, digital assistants, navigation tools, audiobooks, and smart home technologies are helping people with and without visual challenges remain independent, informed, productive, and connected.

Technology continues to evolve rapidly. New tools and services are being developed every day to help individuals with low vision or blindness navigate their daily journey through life more safely and independently. It is suggested that we remain open to learning about these new emerging resources. The tool or service you need may already exist—or may be just around the corner.

What Is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems and technologies that can perform tasks that traditionally required human assistance. AI can help recognize objects, read printed materials aloud, describe photographs, answer questions, provide directions, and assist with everyday decision-making.

Technology as a Tool for Independence. It can assist you with:

• Reading books, your Bible, newspapers, and mail
• Identifying medication labels
• Managing appointments and reminders
Staying in touch with your family and church community
• Making telephone calls and sending messages
Opening doors in your house, turning lights on and off, even when you are not home
• Shopping online
• Navigating unfamiliar locations
• Identifying products and currency
• Monitoring health conditions
• Staying connected with family, friends, and faith communities

Helpful Everyday Technology
• Audiobooks and talking books
• Zoom
• Libby - through your local public library (www.libby.com) and other library-based audio resources
• Screen readers
• Smartphones with voice commands
• Electronic magnifiers
• Talking clocks and watches
• Large-print devices
• Voice-activated assistants

Smartphones and Wearable Technology
Today's smartphones and smart watches offer powerful accessibility features.

Helpful Features might include:
• Voiceover
• Siri
Google
• Magnifier
• Zoom
• Speak Screen
• Large Text and Bold Text
• Voice Control
• Live Captions

Benefits of some Smart Watches Include:
• Voice-activated calling and texting
• Medication reminders
• Appointment reminders
• Fall detection
• Emergency calling
• Health monitoring
• Navigation assistance
AI-Powered Applications

Applications are increasingly using machine learning to identify objects and text in real time.
Examples include:
• Seeing AI
• Be My Eyes
• Aira
• Google Lookout
• Envision AI

These applications can help read printed materials, identify products, recognize objects, provide navigation assistance, and connect users with trained volunteers or AI-generated visual descriptions.

Autonomous Vehicles and Smart Cars
Self-driving technology, often referred to as Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), is regarded as a breakthrough for independence.
Examples include:
Ride-Hailing Services (Waymo)
Fully autonomous ride-hailing services are already allowing legally blind individuals to travel long distances without a human driver or sighted companion.
The Blind Driver Challenge
This initiative explores non-visual interfaces that use audio and haptic feedback to provide sufficient information for a blind individual to operate a vehicle independently.

Haptic Windows
Emerging technologies such as Ford's "Feel the View" convert visual scenery into vibration patterns, allowing passengers to experience landscapes through touch.
Wearables and Navigation
Smart Glasses
Devices equipped with cameras and speakers can read signs, identify objects, and assist with navigation.
Specialized GPS Applications
Advanced wayfinding applications can help users navigate both outdoor and indoor environments.
Smart Canes
Enhanced white canes use sensors to detect obstacles at chest or head height that a standard cane may miss.
Accessible Content and Communication
Refreshable Braille Displays
These portable devices create dynamic Braille characters that allow users to read and write digital information.
Advanced Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
Modern OCR systems can convert printed text, handwritten notes, and complex documents into speech almost instantly.
Smart Homes and Independent Living
Voice-activated technology can assist with:
• Lighting control
• Thermostat adjustments
• Shopping lists
• Medication reminders
• Weather updates
• Emergency assistance

Transportation and Mobility
Technology can support mobility through:
• GPS navigation
• Ride-sharing applications
• Public transportation applications
• Blind-spot monitoring systems
• Backup cameras
• Lane departure warnings
• Voice-guided navigation

Faith, Fellowship, and Spiritual Growth
Individuals with vision loss can access:
• Audio Bibles
• Devotional applications
• Virtual worship services
• Prayer conference calls
• Online Bible studies and ministry programs
Looking Toward the Future

Artificial intelligence, accessibility tools, autonomous transportation, smart devices, and emerging technologies are opening new doors for communication, education, employment, transportation, healthcare, and daily living.
Vision loss may change how a person interacts with the world, but it does not diminish a person's value, purpose, faith, wisdom, or ability to contribute to society.
Technology cannot replace faith, family, community, or professional healthcare. However, when combined with these supports, it can help individuals maintain independence, dignity, safety, and quality of life.

ZBCHM Take-Home Message:
Technology is not something to fear. It is a tool that can help individuals with vision loss remain connected, informed, independent, and engaged in life.

Accessible Content and Interfaces

- **Refreshable Braille Displays:** These portable devices raise and lower pins to create braille characters dynamically, allowing users to read and write digital files or browse the internet. miusa.org
- **Advanced OCR:** New Optical Character Recognition systems can now process complex layouts, like multi-column documents or horizontally formatted text, and immediately convert them to speech. miusa.org

Create a Safe Home Environment

- Improve lighting.
- Remove tripping hazards.
- Label medications clearly.
- Use contrasting colors on steps and edges.
- Organize frequently used items in consistent locations.
- Install grab bars where needed.

Stay Physically Active

- Walking with assistance
- Standing and Chair exercises if not able to get out
- Stretching is key
- Water exercise programs
- Balance and strength activities approved by a healthcare provider

When vision is reduced, people often rely more heavily on their other senses.

Vision loss may change how you see the world, but it does not change your worth, wisdom, faith, purpose, or ability to contribute to others.

ZBCHM reminder: "Move What You Got While You Got It to Move".

Section 15– Sister Tommye Moore's Eye Health Journey: "Keep on Moving"

Sister Tommye Moore, 98 years young, is a treasured member of the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry and a shining example of resilience, faith, and determination. She exercises daily in her home and actively participates in Zion's Standing and Chair Virtual Exercise Program. Sister Moore has also served as a member of Zion's College Ministry, Good Samaritan Club, Media Ministry, and the Robert Owens Noon Day Bible Study Ministry.

At age 98, Sister Moore thanks God for His grace, mercy, and guidance throughout her life. She says, "While I have experienced several vision-related challenges over the years, including glaucoma, cataracts in both eyes, age-related macular degeneration, and chronic dry eyes, I continue to live an active and fulfilling life.

My eye health journey began many years ago when I visited an optometrist simply to obtain a new pair of glasses. During the examination, the doctor became concerned about the pressure in my eye and recommended that I see an ophthalmologist. That referral changed the course of my eye care and may have helped preserve my vision. From that point forward, I learned the importance of regular eye examinations and follow-up care. The ophthalmologist monitored my glaucoma and later discovered cataracts that required surgery. After my first cataract surgery, additional concerns were identified with my retina, and I was referred to a retinal specialist. Over the years, I have worked closely with a team of eye care professionals, including optometrists, ophthalmologists, and retinal specialists.

My journey has not always been easy. Some treatments required frequent appointments, procedures, and ongoing monitoring. Following my second cataract surgery, I experienced swelling and other complications that required careful follow-up. More recently, I was diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration and now receive treatments to help slow its progression. I am grateful that my doctors continue to monitor my condition and that recent examinations have shown improvement. Looking back, I realize that many of my eye conditions were discovered not because I noticed symptoms, but because I kept my routine appointments. That is why I encourage everyone to have their eyes examined regularly—even when you think your vision is fine. Early detection and treatment can make a tremendous difference.

Despite these challenges, I remain active. I exercise daily in my home and participate in Zion Baptist Church's Standing and Chair Virtual Exercise Program. I continue to stay engaged with my church family, community, and the activities that bring me joy. As a Christian, faith has been one of my greatest sources of strength. Any time surgery or treatment is involved, there can be fear and uncertainty. I have learned to pray before every procedure and to thank God afterward for bringing me through. Prayer gives me peace, confidence, and hope.

If I could offer one piece of advice, it would be this: Do not neglect your eye health. Schedule regular eye examinations, follow your doctor's recommendations, and seek specialized care when needed. Most importantly, trust God through every step of the journey. My guiding principle is simple: Trust in the Lord, keep on praying, and He will guide your every step. Keep on moving.

Vision changes may affect how we see the world, but they do not have to diminish our faith, purpose, independence, or joy. With God's help, supportive family and friends, good medical care, and determination, it is possible to continue living a meaningful and productive life.

— Sister Tommye Moore, Age 98
Member, Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry

Section 16 - In Loving Memory of Brother Mac

This guide is dedicated to the loving memory of Brother Mac, a cherished member of the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry and a beloved member of the Zion Baptist Church family for many decades.

Brother Mac faithfully served in numerous ministries throughout the life of the church. He was a devoted member of the Male Choir, Gospel Choir, Adoration, the Voices of Zion, the Mighty Men of Zion, the Charles B. Walker Culture Club, the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry, and served as a Trustee. He proudly served his country in the United States military and later retired after a distinguished career as a letter carrier.

Wherever Brother Mac went, he was known for his warm smile, gentle spirit, quiet strength, unwavering faith, and genuine love for people. He greeted others with kindness and encouragement, leaving a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know him.

Following the passing of his beloved wife, Rosa, Brother Mac continued to live independently for several years. As age-related macular degeneration gradually robbed him of his vision, however, everyday tasks became increasingly difficult. Reading became a challenge. Using the telephone became frustrating. Managing medications, transportation, appointments, finances, and other daily responsibilities required increasing assistance.

Like many older adults experiencing vision loss, Brother Mac faced obstacles that extended far beyond the loss of eyesight. The emotional impact of losing independence, the frustration of navigating daily life, and the limited availability of specialized vision rehabilitation services created additional challenges. Despite these hardships, his faith remained steadfast, and he continued to inspire those around him through his perseverance and grace.

One of the greatest challenges Brother Mac encountered was obtaining timely services. Although referred for vision rehabilitation, he was placed on a waiting list to receive assistance from a local service for the blind at his assistant living facility but they indicated due to staff shortages they would not get to for about 6-8 month. Brother Mac passed before he was able to receive any services. His experience reminds us that many individuals living with significant vision loss face long delays in accessing the resources that can help them remain safe, independent, and engaged in their communities.

Brother Mac's journey reminds us that vision loss affects far more than eyesight — it touches nearly every aspect of daily living. It impacts independence, emotional well-being, relationships, mobility, communication, and quality of life. Yet his story is also one of courage, resilience, faith, and hope.

It is our prayer that this guide will help individuals and families recognize the early signs of vision problems, seek timely eye care, become aware of available resources, and advocate for themselves and those they love. In honoring Brother Mac's life, we also honor the countless individuals whose journeys remind us of the precious gift of sight and the importance of preserving it whenever possible.

"The memory of the righteous is a blessing."

— Proverbs 10:7 (KJV)

Section 17 - Tools and Services That May Help Individuals with Vision Loss

- iPhone accessibility features such as Voiceover, Siri, Zoom, Magnifier, Speak Screen, Large Text, Bold Text, and Voice Control.
- Audiobooks and talking books through public libraries, Libby, Audible, and the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.
- Smart speakers such as Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple HomePod.
- Vision rehabilitation services for adaptive technology, home safety, reading strategies, medication management, and independent living skills.
- Helpful devices such as electronic magnifiers, talking clocks, talking watches, talking blood pressure monitors, talking glucose meters, large-button telephones, large-print keyboards, portable video magnifiers, Braille displays, and Braille instruction.

Section 18 - Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is vision loss a normal part of aging?

Some changes in vision are common with aging, such as needing reading glasses or needing more light to read. Significant vision loss is not a normal part of aging and should be evaluated by an eye care professional.

2. How often should I have an eye examination?

Follow the schedule recommended by your eye care provider. People with diabetes, glaucoma, high blood pressure, macular degeneration, or a family history of eye disease may need more frequent examinations.

3. What is the difference between an optometrist and an ophthalmologist?

Optometrists provide vision exams, prescribe glasses and contacts, and diagnose many eye conditions. Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who specialize in eye care, surgery, and treatment of complex eye diseases.

4. Can vision loss be reversed?

It depends on the cause. Some vision problems can be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, medications, or surgery. Other conditions may not be reversible, but treatment may slow progression and maximize remaining vision.

5. What is macular degeneration?

Age-related macular degeneration affects the macula, the central part of the retina responsible for detailed vision. It can make reading, driving, and recognizing faces difficult.

6. What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a disease that damages the optic nerve and can lead to vision loss. It often develops without pain or early symptoms.

7. If I have diabetes, should I be concerned about my vision?

Yes. Diabetes can damage blood vessels in the retina and lead to diabetic retinopathy. Regular dilated eye exams are essential.

8. Why am I seeing floaters?

Floaters are small spots or shapes that drift across your field of vision. A sudden increase in floaters, especially with flashes of light, requires immediate evaluation.

9. Can I still read if I have vision loss?

In many cases, yes. Large-print books, audiobooks, magnifiers, screen readers, tablets, and adaptive technology can help.

10. Should I learn accessibility tools before my vision gets worse?

Yes. Learning adaptive tools early can make the transition easier and help maintain independence.

11. Is it normal to feel sad, frustrated, or anxious about vision loss?

Yes. Vision loss can affect emotional well-being. Counseling, support groups, faith communities, and family support can help.

12. What warning signs should never be ignored?

Sudden vision loss, severe eye pain, flashes of light, sudden increase in floaters, double vision, a curtain or shadow over vision, and eye injury or chemical exposure require prompt care.

13. Can nutrition help protect my vision?

A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, leafy greens, fish, and whole grains may support eye health and reduce risk for some diseases.

14. Is there hope after vision loss?

Yes. Many people with vision loss continue to live meaningful, productive, independent, and fulfilling lives with support, technology, rehabilitation, and faith.

Section 19 - Preparing for Your Visit to the Optometrist and Ophthalmologist

Your eye examination is an important opportunity to learn about your vision and overall eye health. Bring a family member, friend, or caregiver to help listen, take notes, and ask questions when possible.

Before Your Appointment, Bring:

- Current eyeglasses or contact lenses
- A list of all medications and supplements
- A list of all medical conditions (such as hypertension, diabetes, etc.)
- Family history of eye disease
- A notebook or phone to record important information

Questions to Ask

1. How is my vision compared to my last exam?
2. Have there been any changes in my eye health?
3. Do I need a new prescription for glasses or contact lenses?
4. Are my vision changes normal for my age?
5. Do I have signs of cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease, or changes in my retina or optic nerve?
6. How do my diabetes, high blood pressure, medications, or other medical conditions affect my eyes?
7. What is causing my blurred vision, floaters, flashes, dryness, or irritation?
8. What symptoms should prompt me to call your office immediately?
9. What treatment options are available?
10. What are the benefits and risks of treatment?
11. Will treatment improve my vision or prevent further vision loss?
12. Do I need surgery? If so, what should I expect before, during, and after surgery?
13. Is it safe for me to drive?
14. Would I benefit from low-vision services or adaptive devices?
15. What phone accessibility features or tools should I learn now?
16. What should my family watch for?
17. When should I schedule my next appointment?

Information to Record

Diagnosis: _____

Doctor's recommendations: _____

New medications: _____

Next appointment: _____

Questions for next visit: _____

Bring an advocate whenever possible. Two sets of eyes and ears are often better than one.

Section 20 - Eye Health and Wellness Resource Directory

The following resources may help individuals and families learn more about eye health, vision loss, support services, and advocacy. Contact each organization directly for current services and eligibility requirements.

Organization	Website	Primary Focus
National Eye Institute	https://www.nei.nih.gov	Trusted information on eye diseases, vision research, and eye health education.
American Academy of Ophthalmology	https://www.aao.org	Eye disease education and information on eye care professionals.
American Optometric Association	https://www.aoa.org	Information on vision care, eye exams, and optometry.
Prevent Blindness	https://www.preventblindness.org	Education and advocacy to prevent blindness and preserve sight.
Glaucoma Research Foundation	https://www.glaucoma.org	Education and resources related to glaucoma.
BrightFocus Foundation	https://www.brightfocus.org	Information about macular degeneration, glaucoma, and brain health.
American Diabetes Association	https://www.diabetes.org	Diabetes education and diabetic eye disease information.
American Macular Degeneration Foundation	https://www.macular.org	Education and support for people affected by macular degeneration.
American Foundation for the Blind	https://www.afb.org	Resources for people living with vision loss.
National Federation of the Blind	https://www.nfb.org	Advocacy, programs, and education for people who are blind or visually impaired.
National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled	https://www.loc.gov/nls	Free talking books, audio materials, and reading support for eligible individuals.
American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus	https://www.aapos.org	Children's eye health and vision disorder information.
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	https://www.va.gov	Veterans may qualify for eye exams, eyeglasses, low-vision services, and specialty care.

Washington, DC Area Resources

- Howard University Department of Ophthalmology
- Georgetown University Department of Ophthalmology
- George Washington University Department of Ophthalmology
- MedStar Washington Hospital Center Eye Services
- Lighthouse for the Blind or local vision rehabilitation organizations

Additional Online Resources:

American Council of the Blind
Home Page | American Council of the Blind

Blind Industries and Services of Maryland
Blind Industries & Services of Maryland - BISM

International Braille and Technology Center (in the National Federation of the Blind)
International Braille and Technology Center for the Blind | National Federation of the Blind
MLK Jr. Library Center for Accessibility
Center for Accessibility | District of Columbia Public Library

Metropolitan Washington Ear
Metropolitan Washington Ear – "Free listener services and instruction for qualified individuals"

Section 21 - Educational Disclaimer

This Eye Health and Wellness Guide has been prepared by the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry (ZBCHM) as an educational resource for individuals, families, caregivers, and the community.

The information in this guide is intended to promote awareness, encourage healthy lifestyle choices, and provide general information about eye health, vision wellness, vision loss, available resources, and related topics.

This guide is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease and should not be considered medical advice. The information provided is not a substitute for professional medical care, diagnosis, treatment, or individualized recommendations from your physician, ophthalmologist, optometrist, or other qualified healthcare provider.

Always consult your healthcare provider regarding questions about your vision, eye health, medications, medical conditions, or treatment options. Never delay seeking professional medical advice because of information contained in this publication.

We encourage you to use this guide as a tool to help you become informed, ask questions, advocate for yourself and your loved ones, and make thoughtful decisions as you care for the temple God has entrusted to you.

Section 22 - Closing Scriptures and Final Reflection

All scriptures in this section are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

3 John 1:2

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

A reminder that God cares about our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Psalm 119:105

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Even when physical vision is limited, God's Word continues to provide direction.

Psalm 146:8

"The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous."

A reminder of God's compassion and care.

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

God remains our guide through change.

Isaiah 41:10

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee…"

A comforting promise for anyone facing illness or vision loss.

2 Corinthians 5:7

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."

A powerful scripture for the journey of vision loss and faith.

Psalm 27:1

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?…"

God's light shines even in difficult seasons.

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

A closing blessing for all who read this guide.

Final Reflection

As we conclude this Eye Health and Wellness Guide, may we remember that eyesight is a precious gift from God. Through regular eye care, healthy living, faith, community support, and advocacy, we can help protect the gift of sight for ourselves and those we love.

And when vision changes come, as they sometimes do, may we find comfort in knowing that God continues to guide our steps, strengthen our hearts, and illuminate our path.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Appendices

Appendix A - Eye Health Glossary

Cataract: Clouding of the eye's lens.

Cornea: Clear front layer of the eye that helps focus light.

Retina: Light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye.

Macula: Central part of the retina responsible for detailed vision.

Glaucoma: Disease that damages the optic nerve.

Optic Nerve: Nerve that carries visual information from the eye to the brain.

Pupil: Dark opening that lets light enter the eye.

Iris: Colored part of the eye that controls pupil size.

Floaters: Small spots or shapes that drift across vision.

Low Vision: Vision loss that cannot be fully corrected with glasses, contacts, medicine, or surgery.

Vision Rehabilitation: Services that help people adapt to vision loss and maintain independence.

Appendix B - Eye Health Screening Checklist

Last eye exam date: _____

Diagnosed with diabetes: □ Yes □ No

Diagnosed with hypertension: □ Yes □ No

Family history of glaucoma: □ Yes □ No

Family history of macular degeneration: □ Yes □ No

Difficulty reading: □ Yes □ No

Difficulty driving at night: □ Yes □ No

Blurred vision: □ Yes □ No

Flashes or floaters: □ Yes □ No

Uses corrective lenses: □ Yes □ No

Taking medications that affect vision: □ Yes □ No

Appendix C - Personal Vision Health Record

Eye doctor name: _____

Phone number: _____

Last eye exam: _____

Next appointment: _____

Eye medications: _____

Glasses prescription date: _____

Diagnosed eye conditions: _____

Emergency contact: _____

Transportation plan for appointments: _____

Appendix D - iPhone Accessibility Features for Vision Loss

VoiceOver: Reads aloud what is on the screen.

Siri: Helps make calls, send messages, set reminders, and ask questions by voice.

Zoom: Magnifies the screen.

Magnifier: Uses the camera as a magnifying glass.

Speak Screen: Reads screen content aloud.

Large Text and Bold Text: Makes words easier to read.

Voice Control: Allows operation by spoken commands.

Appendix E - Caregiver Resource Guide

- Ask the person how they would like to be helped.
- Do not take over tasks unnecessarily. Encourage independence when safe.
- Keep household items in consistent locations.
- Provide transportation support when possible.
- Help organize medications and appointments.
- Support use of accessibility tools and audio resources.
- Stay alert for signs of depression, anxiety, or isolation.
- Help the person remain connected to church, family, and community.

Appendix F - Emergency Eye Symptoms Quick Card

- Sudden vision loss
- Severe eye pain
- Flashes of light
- Sudden increase in floaters
- Chemical exposure
- Eye injury
- Curtain-like shadow over vision
- Sudden double vision

If any of these occur, seek immediate medical care.

Appendix G - Ophthalmology Visit Worksheet

Main concern today: _____

Symptoms noticed: _____

When did symptoms begin? _____

Questions for the doctor: _____

Diagnosis: _____

Plan of care: _____

Follow-up date: _____

Appendix H - Quick Resource List

- National Eye Institute
- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Optometric Association
- Prevent Blindness
- National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled
- American Foundation for the Blind
- National Federation of the Blind
- Lighthouse for the Blind or local low-vision services
- Veterans Affairs Vision Services
- Local hospital ophthalmology departments

Sources and Acknowledgments
Information contained in this guide was developed using educational materials and publicly available resources from the National Eye Institute (NIH), American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Optometric Association, Prevent Blindness, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, American Foundation for the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, and other public educational resources. Content has been adapted, summarized, and rewritten by the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry for educational and community outreach purposes.

A Note from Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry

We hope you find this Eye Health Guide to be a valuable resource as you seek to learn more about eye health, vision, and overall wellness. Our goal is to provide information that empowers you to make informed decisions and to serve as a starting point for conversations about your eye health. Please remember that your eye care professionals—your optometrist and ophthalmologist—along with your primary healthcare provider, are your best sources of personalized medical advice. This guide and information found on the internet should never replace professional medical evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment.

If you find the information in this guide helpful, please feel free to share it with others. You may create a link to the Zion Baptist Church Health Ministry website at "www.ziondc.org/health or adapt and personalize this information for use within your own church, community organization, or geographic area. We believe that education is one of the most powerful tools for promoting health and wellness. If this guide helps even one person protect, preserve, or improve their vision, then our efforts have been worthwhile. In the "Blink of an Eye," it's yours!

Closing Scripture
"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."
— Matthew 6:22 (KJV)

May God bless your sight, strengthen your health, and guide your path with His light.