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For Further Information, Contact:
Amanda Soelle, WOA Director of Communications
Email: amanda@woa-eyes.org
Phone: 608.824.2200

LOW VISION DOES NOT HAVE TO DIMINISH QUALITY OF LIFE

The Wisconsin Optometric Association encourages those affected by low vision to protect their independence

MADISON, Wis. – What exactly is “low vision?” According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), low vision is a visual impairment which, despite some level of visual correction such as standard glasses, contact lenses, medications, or surgery, makes everyday tasks difficult to accomplish. Routine actions such as reading the mail, shopping, cooking, viewing the television, and writing can seem challenging to a person with low vision. Members of the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) wish to bring attention to the difficulties low vision can place on quality of life for those affected and to educate those same individuals on ways to improve their day-to-day lives. The WOA encourages those affected by low vision to take charge in protecting their independence and quality of life.

Vision Loss is a Substantial Concern for Many

Conducted by the American Optometric Association (AOA), the 2017 Annual American Eye-Q® survey revealed that U.S. adults are definitely concerned about the potential for vision loss as it relates to their quality of life. When asked about concerns over losing physical abilities, 59% of those surveyed agreed that they worry about the health of their eyes regularly. Loss of vision ranked ahead of the loss of memory, the loss of physical mobility, and loss of hearing.

How Does Low Vision Occur?

A majority of people develop low vision as a result of eye diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, or age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Macular degeneration accounts for a significant amount of all low vision cases and, according to the AOA, is the leading cause of severe vision loss in American adults over the age of 50. Visual impairment at any age can decrease an individual's mobility and self-esteem, however. Although vision already lost cannot usually be restored, this does not have to mean the loss of independence or a reduced quality of life.

Low Vision and Protecting Your Independence

According to Dr. Tessa Sokol, 2022 WOA President and Madison, WI optometrist, “Early diagnosis by an eye doctor is very important in treating low vision and preventing it from progressing, especially if you have glaucoma, cataracts, diabetes, or AMD.” WOA members encourage all adults, especially those who are noticing even slight changes in their vision, to visit their eye doctor each year as a preventative measure. “Being proactive about your eye health is an important step in preserving the future of your sight and your freedom,” asserts Dr. Sokol.

In addition to visiting your eye doctor on a routine basis, the WOA recommends everyone practice a healthy, smoke-free lifestyle including proper diet and exercise. Following these suggestions, along with taking the antioxidant vitamins C, E, A, and Zinc, may also help reduce your risk of vision loss.

“Low vision does not have to diminish a person's quality of life,” affirms Dr. Sokol. There are many low vision aids, resources, and treatments available as well as continuous research that is being done. See your eye doctor for a comprehensive eye exam today and take the first step in protecting your independence. Visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members> for a list of licensed optometrists in your area.

About the AOA American Eye-Q® survey

The tenth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From February 19 - March 4, 2015, PSB conducted 1,000 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (margin of error is plus or minus 3.10 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.)

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members.

Approximately 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.