

Glossary

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) - An eye disease that causes damage to the macula as an individual ages, resulting in blurred and diminished sight in the center of the field of vision.

Assistive and adaptive device - Equipment, technology, or software that is specially designed for people with disabilities to learn, communicate, or function better, with the goal of maintaining or improving their independence

Cataract – An eye disease in which the lens of the eye becomes cloudy, resulting in blurred vision

Comprehensive eye exam – An eye exam performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist that includes a number of tests to assess overall vision and eye health

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) – An eye disease that is a complication of diabetes, in which damage occurs to blood vessels in the back of the eye (retina)

Dilated eye exam – An exam that uses eye drops to widen the pupil of the eye so that the structures in the back of the eye can be viewed more clearly

Dry eye disease (DED) – A chronic condition that can occur when the eyes are inadequately lubricated due to poor tear quality or quantity

Endocrinologist – A doctor specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the endocrine glands and hormones

Free radicals – Unstable atoms that can damage cells, causing illness and aging

Glaucoma – A group of eye disorders characterized by damage to the optic nerve, often associated with increased eye pressure

Macula – A the part of the light-sensitive tissue in the back of the eye that is responsible for central vision

Macular edema – An eye disease where fluid builds up in the macula, affecting central vision

Ophthalmologist – A medical doctor who specializes in eyes that can provide complete eye care, including comprehensive eye exams, corrective lens prescriptions, treatment of complex eye diseases, and eye surgery

Optician – A vision care professional who makes and supplies corrective lenses, such as glasses and contacts

Optic nerve – The nerve that transmits visual information from the eye to the brain, allowing sight

Optometrist – A eye care practitioner that can perform comprehensive eye exams to evaluate and treat common eye disorders and diseases, assess the clarity of your vision, and prescribe corrective lenses

Patient navigator – A person who helps guide patients through the health care system; also known as patient advocate

Prior authorization – A process used by some health insurance companies that requires the review and approval of a specific procedure, service, or drug before it is prescribed

Pupil – The hole in the center of the eye that allows light to enter the eye

Refractive error – A common eye disorder in which the eye cannot clearly focus on external images, resulting in nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, or presbyopia

Retina – The thin layer of cells at the back of the eye that sense light and send the image information to the brain through the optic nerve

Sclera – The white of the eye

Step therapy – A strategy used by health insurers to help contain rising healthcare costs, where prescribed treatment for a medical condition is first authorized for a lower-cost treatment, and then progresses "step-wise" to other therapies, if needed. This approach is sometimes called "fail first" because patients must try and "fail" lower-cost treatments before gaining access to the treatment their clinician originally prescribed.

Thyroid gland – An endocrine gland in the neck that helps regulate the body's metabolism through thyroid hormone production

Thyroid eye disease (TED) – An autoimmune condition in which the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue in and around the eye, causing progressive inflammation and damage particularly to the extraocular muscle, connective, and fatty tissue

Vision rehab specialist – An eye care professional that helps people with vision impairments learn how to use assistive technology and develop skills to successfully manage living with impaired vision