

Canadians Are More Afraid of Losing Their Eyesight Than a Limb, But Aren't Getting Their Eyes Tested

This World Sight Day, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society Is Urging People to be Proactive About Their Eye Health

Toronto, May 19, 2020 - When asked to rate their most feared disability, Canadians over-whelmingly agree that they'd rather lose their hearing—or even a limb—over their vision.¹ On a global scale, 70% of people would rather give up 10 years of their life or sacrifice a limb, than lose their eyesight. While healthy eyesight is something everyone obviously values, fewer than half of Canadians experiencing symptoms of serious eye disease get their eyes tested by an ophthalmologist. It's time to do something about it. October 8 is World Sight Day and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS), wants to help Canadians prioritize their vision when it comes to their overall health.

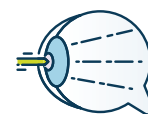
COS explains that the risk of developing one of the four most common eye diseases including cataracts, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy, is higher than most people think. In fact, more than 5.5 million Canadians (that's nearly one in every six people!), are living with one of the four major eye diseases and are at serious risk of losing their vision. In honour of World Sight Day, COS is educating the public on the symptoms of eye disease through the newly-launched redesign of their website, featuring online vision tests for visual acuity and AMD.

www.seethepossibilities.ca has already received well over a million views on its various videos and offers a wealth of information including how to determine your risk.

"We want to address Canadians more directly when it comes to their eye health," explains Dr. Phil Hooper, Chair of the council on advocacy for the Canadian Ophthalmological Society. "As hard as it might be to imagine, each year, more Canadians are diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration than the number of Canadians with breast cancer, prostate cancer, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's, combined."²

More than 285 million people worldwide live with low vision and blindness. But despite the staggering statistics, there is good news. "Vision loss can be treated or even prevented in 75% of cases of serious eye disease," explains Hooper. In fact, eye surgery is the most frequently performed type of surgery in Canada and throughout the world. In Ontario alone, over 10,000 eye surgeries are performed every month by ophthalmologists. The key is early detection: healthy adults experiencing normal vision should have their eyes tested at least every 10 years between the ages of 19 - 40; every five years from 41 - 55; every three years from 56 - 65; and adults over the age of 65 should have an eye exam every two years.

The leading causes of blindness in Canada are:



Cataracts:

3,541,000 people



Age-related macular degeneration:

1,574,000 people



Glaucoma

294,600 people



Diabetic retinopathy

749,800 people

In addition to routine eye exams, COS encourages Canadians to educate themselves on both the risk factors for serious eye disease and on what to look for when it comes to symptoms. See an ophthalmologist if you experience loss of vision, changes in vision such as blurriness, anomalies like black spots in your field of vision, physical changes in the eye, or changes in colour vision. Visit www.cos-sco.ca for more detailed information.

See the Possibilities, know the risks

For World Sight Day, COS is inviting Canadians to find out their risk for developing one of the four serious eye diseases by taking a quick and simple assessment on the new COS website at www.seethepossibilities.ca. Rest assured, taking the test comes with reward! When you complete the questionnaire, you are automatically entered to **win one of fifty gift certificates of \$250 each from BonLook**, a Montreal-based eyewear brand specializing in trendy, affordable prescription eyewear.



Don't gamble with your vision.

60% of Canadians experience symptoms of potential eye disease, yet only half have reported they had seen a health care professional.

The odds of getting a serious eye disease are greater than you think.



See The Possibilities

Beat the odds at SeeThePossibilities.ca

About The Canadian Ophthalmological Society

The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada. As eye physicians and surgeons, we are committed to assuring the provision of optimal medical and surgical eye care for all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support our members in practice. Our membership includes over 900 ophthalmologists and 200 ophthalmology residents. We work collaboratively with government, other national and international specialty societies, our academic communities (ACUPO), our provincial partners and affiliates and other eye care professionals and patient groups to advocate for health policy in Canada in the area of eye and vision health. COS is an accredited, award-winning provider of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and is an affiliate of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA).

Your Team of Eye Health Professionals

Confused by the specific roles fulfilled by each type of eye care professional? COS has made transparent the qualifications and services provided by the three professionals who make up a complete eye health team:

Ophthalmologists



- highly trained eye physicians and surgeons, the designated medical leaders in the eye care team.
- licensed medical specialists in eye and vision care, surgery and medical interventions, and the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of serious eye disease.
- perform comprehensive eye exams, conduct surgery, prescribe and administer medication, and determine the ideal prescription for corrective lenses.
- physicians who, upon graduation from medical school, undertake several years of post-graduate training in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the eye.

Optometrists



- non-medical primary health care providers who specialize in eye examination and the detection of abnormalities in the eye, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of some eye diseases.
- optometrists refer patients to ophthalmologists for the treatment of major eye diseases.

Opticians



- licensed professionals specially trained to design, fit, and dispense eyeglasses, contact lenses, low vision aids, and prosthetic ocular devices.
- interpret written prescriptions from ophthalmologists (medical doctors) and optometrists (non-medical eye care professionals) to help correct a person's eyesight.

1. Leger's online panel: survey of 1514 Canadians was completed between March 6-9, 2020. The margin of error for this study was +/-2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

2. Approx. 200,000 new cases of AMD are diagnosed each year. This is more than the following combined: Breast Cancer 27,400; Prostate Cancer 23,300; Parkinson's approx. 10,000 and dementia (including Alzheimer's) 76,000.