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**Part of Falling LinKS:
Falling Less in Kansas (Falling LinKS)**
is a community research partnership between
Wichita State University Regional Institute on Aging,
Harvey County Department on Aging
and Envision Vision Rehabilitation Center.



*Harvey County
Department
on Aging*



Comprehensive, multi-disciplinary low vision
rehabilitation for people with vision loss

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Vision Loss *and* Fall Prevention





Low Vision and Falls

There are nearly 10 million Americans who are blind or low vision. Low vision is defined as vision loss that is not correctable by prescription eyeglasses, medicine or surgery.

People with visual impairments are more than twice as likely to fall as people without visual impairments. Vision problems can increase the likelihood of a fall by decreasing the ability to detect obstacles and lessening stability.

Low vision and blindness increase significantly with age, particularly for people over age 65. People 80 years of age and older currently make up eight percent of the population, but account for 69 percent of blindness.

What causes falls?

Falls are the leading cause of death by injury in people over the age of 65. While there are many causes of falls, the majority are age-related.

Falls can be caused by many factors including poor eyesight or hearing, loss of balance due to illness, physical condition, or side effects of medication.

What are the risk factors?

There are many contributing factors that can cause falls which are right in your own home.

Safety Questions	YES	NO
Are your floor coverings fastened to prevent tripping?		
Do you have handrails on your steps?		
Do you have adequate lighting?		
Do you have clear pathways?		
Are your hallways and pathways clear of cords or wires?		
Do you have window treatments to prevent glare?		

If you answered **NO** to any of these questions, you may be at risk for a future fall.



The following pages include a screening to identify individuals who may have a vision problem. People who wear glasses or contact lenses should answer the questions in terms of how they see when wearing their glasses or contact lenses. This does not include the use of low



Screening Questions	YES	NO
Do you ever feel that problems with your vision make it difficult for you to do the things you would like to do?	1	0
Can you see the large print headlines in the newspaper?	0	1
Can you see the regular print in newspapers, magazines or books?	0	1
Can you see the numbers and names in the telephone book?	0	1
When you are walking in the street, can you see the "WALK" sign and street names?	0	1
When crossing the street, do cars seem to appear very suddenly?	1	0
Does trouble with your vision make it difficult for you to watch TV, play cards, sew, or any similar type of activity?	1	0
Does trouble with your vision make it difficult for you to see labels on medicine bottles?	1	0

continued on next page



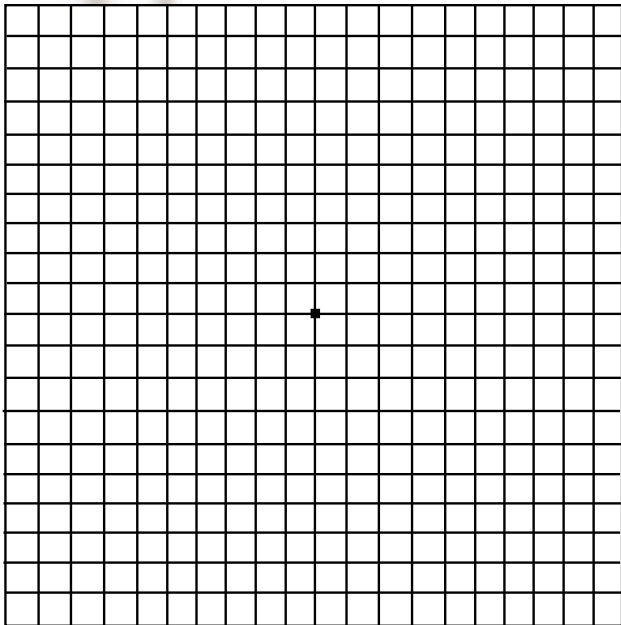
Screening Questions <i>cont.</i>	YES	NO
Does trouble with your vision make it difficult for you to read prices when you shop?	1	0
Does trouble with your vision make it difficult for you to read your mail?	1	0
Does trouble with your vision make it difficult for you to read your own handwriting?	1	0
Can you recognize the faces of family or friends when you are across an average size room?	0	1
Do you have any particular difficulty seeing in dim light?	1	0
Do you tend to sit very close to the television?	1	0
Has a doctor ever told you that nothing more can be done for your vision?	1	0
TOTAL:		

If you scored **nine** or **higher**, schedule an appointment with your eye doctor.

Amsler Grid



A test for macular degeneration and other visual problems



Amsler Grid Instructions

- Wear the eyeglasses you wear when reading.
- Position the grid at your normal reading distance.
- Cover one eye at a time with your hand.
- Stare at the dot in the center. Do not let your eye drift from the center dot.
- Contact your eye care doctor immediately if any of the straight lines appear wavy, bent or missing. If any of the boxes differ in size or shape from the others, are blurry or discolored, you should schedule an eye examination.





The Centers for Disease Control recommends the following tips for preventing a fall:

- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- **Contact your doctor or pharmacist.** He or she should review all the medications you take, including over-the-counter medications, as some can cause drowsiness or dizziness.
- **Have an annual eye exam.** Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.

- **Prevent dizziness.** Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.
- **Wear shoes at all times.** Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers without rubber grips.
- **Improve lighting.** Install brighter light bulbs. Florescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.

- **Add contrast to your home.** By painting a contrasting color on the top edge of all steps, you'll be able to see the stairs better. For example, use a light colored paint on dark wood.





How can low vision rehabilitation help me?

If you are experiencing vision loss, low vision professionals should be a part of your plan of care. Your doctor's early referral for low vision rehabilitation can help minimize the negative impact of vision loss on daily life. This process begins with a low vision exam with an optometrist or ophthalmologist to determine the nature of your vision impairment. When the assessment is complete, the doctor will suggest a plan of care that may include use of optical devices, adaptive aids and an individualized low vision rehabilitation plan to help you make the most of your existing vision.