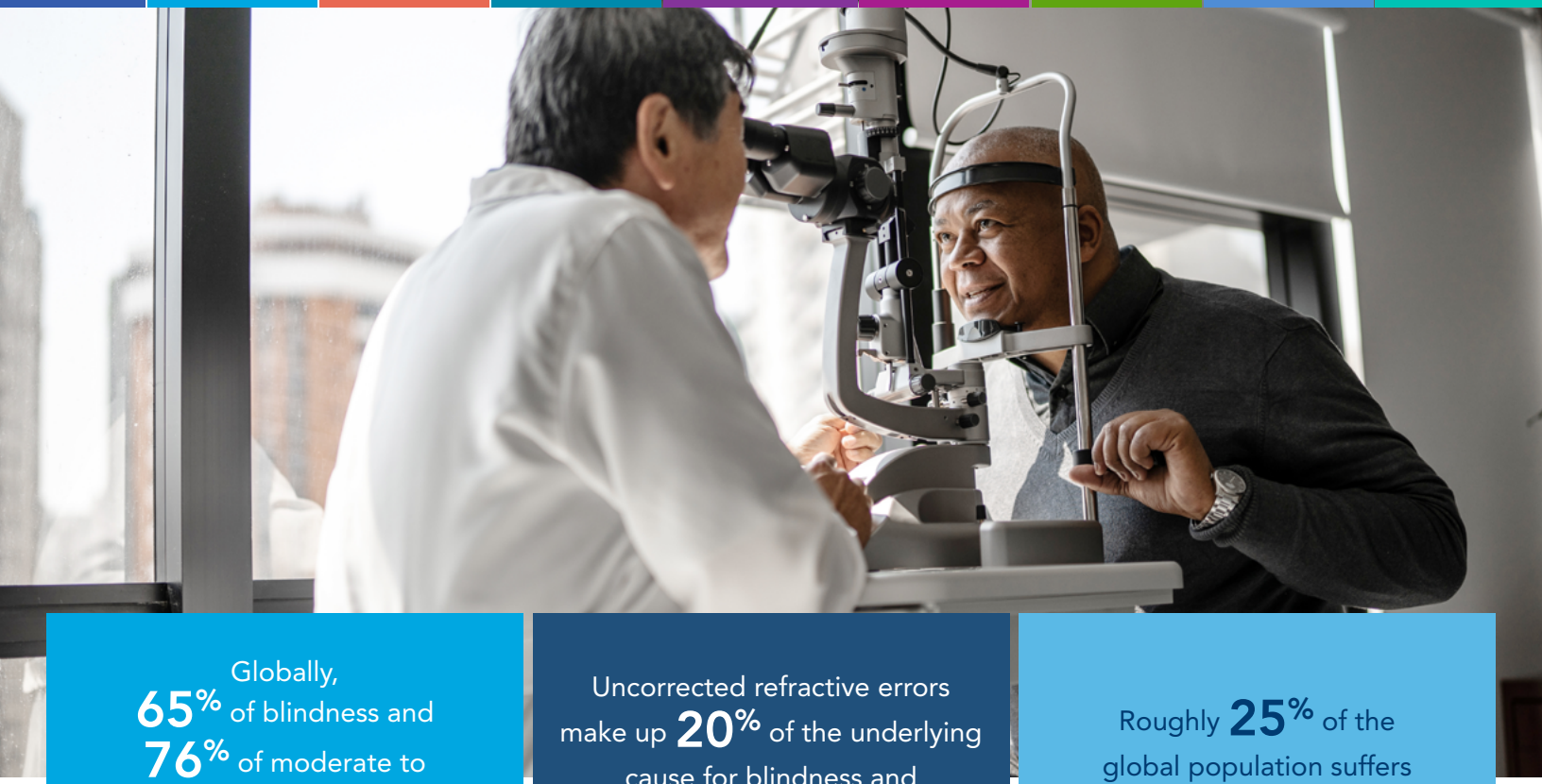
The Importance of Preventive Eye Exams

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is here to help you understand the importance of preventive eye exams for you and your family. Comprehensive eye exams can spot signs of at least **30 serious health issues**, including diabetes, glaucoma, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, neurological disorders, hepatitis and other infections.



Globally, **65%** of blindness and **76%** of moderate to severe vision impairment had a preventable or treatable cause.*

Uncorrected refractive errors make up **20%** of the underlying cause for blindness and **51%** for moderate to severe vision impairment.*

Roughly **25%** of the global population suffers from vision impairment due to refractive errors.**

*According to an analysis published in the National Library of Medicine, Causes of Vision Loss Worldwide
**According to an article published in the National Library of Medicine, Uncorrected Refractive Errors

Why are eye exams so important?

Eye exams are the first line of defense against refractive errors. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), refractive errors are common vision problems– impacting over 45% of Americans – that occur because of how the eye is formed. There are four types of refractive errors:

- **Nearsightedness (myopia):** objects far away appear out of focus
- **Farsightedness (hyperopia):** nearby objects appear out of focus
- **Astigmatism:** an irregularity in the shape of the cornea or lens
- **Presbyopia:** difficulty in focusing on nearby objects due to age-related changes in the eye

These refractive errors can be easily diagnosed with a simple eye exam and treated with eyeglasses, contact lenses or laser eye surgery. Despite having simple solutions, uncorrected refractive errors continue to be a problem for many Americans who are unaware they are not seeing as well as they could be.

The Importance of Preventive Eye Exams

What happens when eye conditions go untreated?

Eye conditions, such as refractive errors, impact more than just the eyes; vision problems can impact overall health and well-being. When left untreated, refractive errors can cause blurred vision and headaches. These symptoms, according to the American Optometric Association, can be exasperated due to eye strain associated with the use of digital devices and be a detriment to an individual's social life and ability to work.

Refractive errors are associated with a host of more serious eye concerns. Individuals with refractive errors, particularly those who are nearsighted, are at increased risk for:

- Retinal detachment
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Myopic degeneration

And whether corrected or uncorrected, vision problems and impairments are associated with:

- A decrease in physical activity
- Neuropsychiatric disorders
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Cardiometabolic disorders
- Dementia
- Alzheimer's disease
- Diabetes

What can you do?

Despite the complex social and health issues associated with vision problems and impairments due to refractive errors, the solution is simple – preventive eye exams.

It is important for you to see your eye doctor regularly; how often will depend on your overall health. The American Optometric Association recommends that adults with healthy eyes receive an eye exam every two years, and yearly after the age of 65. Adults with known vision problems and a family history of eye disease should have their eyes checked yearly. Individuals with certain conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure may need to have their eyes checked more regularly.

Regardless of the health of your eyes, we encourage you to build healthy eye habits and take advantage of your vision coverage from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Start by going to BCBSM.com to find an in-network eye doctor, and then get yourself and your family up to-date on your preventative eye exams. From there you can access your plan website for additional tools and resources on eye health.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Care Network of Michigan

OD 19486 SEP 22 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. W008056