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**For more information:**  
Prevent Blindness  
Sarah Hecker  
(312) 363-6035  
shecker@preventblindness.org

**Cataract Rates Continue to Increase, Remains Leading Global Cause of Blindness**

***- Prevent Blindness Declares June as Cataract Awareness Month to Educate Public on Most Common Eye Disease -***

**CHICAGO (May 18, 2017)** – Cataract is responsible for 51 percent of world blindness, according to the [World Health Organization](#). In the United States, the current number of those with cataract is estimated to be more than 25.7 million. Projections from [Prevent Blindness](#) research estimate that number will increase to 38.5 million by 2032, and to 45.6 million by the year 2050.

Prevent Blindness, the nation's oldest eye health and safety non-profit organization, has declared June as Cataract Awareness Month to educate the public on risk factors, symptoms and treatment options. For those considering surgery and their caregivers, Prevent Blindness offers a free online guide at: <http://www.preventblindness.org/cataract-surgery>.

Cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens which blocks or changes the passage of light into the eye. Cataracts usually form in both eyes, but not at the same rate. They can develop slowly or quickly, or progress to a certain point, then not get any worse.

Besides aging, other factors may cause cataracts to form. Eye infections, some medicines (such as steroids), injuries or exposure to intense heat or radiation may cause cataracts. Too much exposure to non-visible sunlight (called UV or ultraviolet light) and various diseases, such as diabetes or metabolic disorders, may also contribute to cataracts forming.

Types of cataract include:

- **Age-related** – 95 percent of cataracts are age-related, usually after age 40.
- **Congenital** – These are present at birth, usually caused by infection or inflammation during pregnancy; possibly inherited.
- **Traumatic** – Lens damage from a hard blow, cut, puncture, intense heat or chemical burn may cause cataracts.
- **Secondary** – Some medicines, eye disease, eye infection, or diseases such as diabetes cause these cataracts.
- **Radiation** – Cataracts can develop after exposure to some types of radiation.

According to the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#), there are approximately 2 million cataract surgeries performed in the United States every year. And, in approximately 90 percent of cases, people who have cataract surgery have improved vision afterward.

Most cataract surgery is covered by Medicare and health insurance. However, it is important the patient talks to his or her eyecare professional and insurance provider to determine what surgery-related expenses are covered and by how much. For example, some types of intraocular lenses (the artificial lens used to replace the natural lens) cost more than others.

“As the U.S. population continues to age, the number of those affected by cataract is also increasing significantly,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Fortunately, cataract surgery has an extremely high success rate. Talking with your eyecare professional about what treatment is right for you is essential to protect the gift of sight today and for years to come.”

For free information on cataract, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit the Prevent Blindness website at [preventblindness.org/cataract](http://preventblindness.org/cataract).

### **About Prevent Blindness**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

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