



Save Your Vision Week, 1990

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The loss of the precious gift of sight—at any age—is always tragic, but even more so when it could have been prevented.

Certain eye disorders in young children can interfere with the development of normal vision. Some of these problems are difficult to detect and may go unnoticed until they have caused significant, perhaps even permanent, damage. Therefore, it is essential that parents have their children's vision checked at or before age 3. The early discovery and prompt treatment of an eye problem can prevent visual loss that might otherwise be irreparable by the time a child reaches school age.

In adulthood, the estimated 11 million Americans who have diabetes are vulnerable to a potentially blinding eye disease known as diabetic retinopathy. People with diabetes often develop this condition, in which weakened blood vessels in the eye can cause severe vision loss or blindness. Despite the availability of sight-saving treatments, diabetic retinopathy robs more middle-aged Americans of sight than any other eye disease. The surest way someone with diabetes can prevent loss of vision from diabetic retinopathy is by having an annual eye examination. With early diagnosis, diabetic retinopathy can be treated.

Open-angle glaucoma, the most common form of glaucoma in the United States, often appears in late middleage. Glaucoma can usually be controlled with medication. Tragically, however, it is still a leading cause of blindness among older individuals and Black Americans. Because glaucoma causes few if any symptoms in its early stages, millions of otherwise healthy people are unaware that they have the disease. That is why Black men and women, individuals with diabetes, and members of a family with a history of glaucoma should be especially diligent about seeking regular, comprehensive eye examinations.

Although eye diseases take their greatest toll on the vision of older men and women, the most common form, cataract, can be treated effectively. Today, removing a cataract and implanting a plastic lens is a highly successful and comparatively simple operation. Similarly, laser surgery can stop the severe loss of vision that results from an advanced form of age-related macular degeneration, an insidious disease that gradually destroys central vision. Proper timing of laser treatment, however, is very important if irretrievable loss of vision from this disease is to be prevented.

Because periodic eye examinations can lead to the detection and treatment of disorders and diseases that might otherwise pose a serious threat to one's vision, all Americans should make regular visits to their ophthalmologist or optometrist.

Seeking routine eye exams by a licensed professional is one of the best ways we can protect ourselves from needless vision loss. However, we can also protect our eyesight by taking a few simple precautions in the course of our daily activities. For example, goggles or some other form of protective eyewear should always be worn when handling potentially dangerous chemicals or machinery. Such safety gear should also be worn when participating in certain sports. Those Americans who wear contact lenses should always be certain to wear, clean, and handle them correctly, in accordance with the directions of their eye care professional. By following such simple steps, and by seeking periodic eye exams, each of us can safeguard one of our greatest blessings: the gift of sight.

To remind all Americans of the importance of proper eye care, the Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 169a), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week of March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week of March 4 through March 10, 1990, as Save Your Vision Week. I urge all Americans to participate in this observance by making eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives. I also invite eye care professionals, the communications media, and all public and private organizations committed to the goal of sight conservation to join in activities that will make Americans more aware of the steps they can take to protect their vision.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

George Bush