



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people begin life with generally very good vision—on average better than non-Indigenous people—but in adulthood, rates of blindness increase at an earlier age than for non-Indigenous people.



Complications from some health conditions (e.g. diabetes) can result in severe vision loss and blindness that can be prevented if people receive regular eye checks, relevant eye screening and care.



It's important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults are supported to get regular eye checks and navigate the treatment pathway.

Eye screening and care: what's it all about?

Eye screening is a quick way to detect eye problems and can be conducted by a range of trained primary health care (PHC) professionals, including: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners, eye health workers (EHWs), regional eye health coordinators (REHCs), nurses and general practitioners (GPs).



Other PHC professionals can also play an important role in encouraging patients to get eye checks, including: health promotion officers, diabetes educators, and chronic disease care coordinators.



When eye checks indicate that patients have reduced vision, diabetes and/or complex eye conditions, PHC professionals refer them to an optometrist or an eye specialist (ophthalmologist) if a more comprehensive eye exam and treatment may be needed. Optometrists can correct vision problems with glasses or contact lenses, while specialist eye doctors (ophthalmologists) can also treat eye diseases with medication and/or surgery.



Eye care often involves different health professionals, seen at different times, in different locations. However, in remote areas and within some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services, PHC professionals and visiting optometry and/or ophthalmology teams work together to provide eye care in the health centre, or in a mobile vision van (a specialist treatment centre on wheels).



Sources

- Remote Area Health Corps, Brien Holden Vision Institute (n.d.) *Primary eye care checks* (eLearning module). Canberra: Remote Area Health Corps
- Brien Holden Vision Institute Academy (n.d.) *Eye and vision care toolkit*. Sydney: Brien Holden Vision Institute

More information

Online education

- [Diabetic retinopathy grading course](#) (Indigenous Eye Health and Centre for Eye Research Australia)
- eLearning modules (Remote Area Health Corps):
 - [Primary eye care checks](#)
 - [Eye health and diabetes](#)
 - [Trachoma](#)
- [Eye and vision care toolkit](#) (Brien Holden Vision)
- [Retinal camera training for primary health care workers](#) (Brien Holden Vision Institute)

Guidelines

- [Guidelines for the management of diabetic retinopathy](#) (National Health and Medical Research Council)
- [Trachoma: CDNA national guidelines for the public health management of trachoma](#) (Communicable Disease Network Australia)

Education and other resources

- [Check Today, See Tomorrow: resource package](#) (Indigenous Eye Health)
 - [MBS item 715/12325 eye check card](#)
- [Diabetic eye screening: education resource for Aboriginal Health Workers](#) (Lions Outback Vision)
- [Outback Vision diabetic retinopathy: video](#) (Lions Outback Vision)
- [Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training: project information](#) (Brien Holden Vision Institute)

Manuals and guides

- [CARPA standard treatment manual: a clinic manual for primary health care practitioners in remote and Indigenous health services in central and northern Australia: eye assessment](#) (Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association)
- [Chronic conditions manual: prevention and management of chronic conditions in Australia: Child and adult health checks \(eyes and vision\)](#) (Rural and Remote Clinical Support Unit, Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service)
- [Clinical procedures manual for remote and rural practice: supporting clinical practice in the bush: checking near and distance vision \(CRANApplus\)](#)
- [National guide to a preventive health assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: eye health](#) (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners)
 - [Visual acuity](#)
 - [Trachoma and trichiasis](#)

This factsheet has been developed by the Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet and The Fred Hollows Foundation. This and other multimedia resources are available on the Health/InfoNet's Eye Health webpage: healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/eye-health.

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