

Impaired vision increases risk of depression in midlife women

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Midlife women are known to have the highest prevalence of depression compared with all other age groups, and women have higher depression rates than men. A new study suggests that midlife vision impairment is associated with increased odds of future depressive symptoms for midlife women. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*.

Despite the demonstrable increase in the prevalence of both depression and common eye disorders that can compromise vision during [midlife](#), knowledge about the effect of vision on [depressive symptoms](#) in midlife adults is limited. There is, however, literature that suggests that poor vision or [vision impairment](#) is associated with a higher risk of depression in older persons. But many vision-threatening ocular conditions emerge before older age, as evidenced by the tripling of vision impairment prevalence through the midlife years.

These conditions include common and correctable ones such as refractive errors and cataracts and other more serious, chronic eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy, and macular degeneration. A new study, based on data from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN), sought to assess the longitudinal association between vision impairment and depressive symptoms in midlife women. Based on the results, researchers concluded that there is a significant longitudinal association of mild and moderate to severe vision impairment, with subsequent depressive symptoms, in midlife women.

Researchers additionally noted that midlife depression has far-reaching consequences not only in terms of concurrent poor health outcomes but also as a deterrent to a healthy aging process. They suggest that early

identification and timely correction of vision problems is an important step in preserving mental and [physical health](#) in midlife women.

Study results are published in the article "Longitudinal association of midlife vision impairment and depressive symptoms: The Study of Women's Health Across the Nation, Michigan site."

"This study identified a significant longitudinal link between [visual impairment](#) and subsequent development of depressive symptoms in midlife women. Given that the combination of visual impairment and depression has a particularly devastating effect on physical and [mental health](#), correcting vision problems early is important for future quality of life," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

More information: Carrie A. Karvonen-Gutierrez et al, Longitudinal association of midlife vision impairment and depressive symptoms, *Menopause* (2021). [DOI: 10.1097/GME.0000000000001880](https://doi.org/10.1097/GME.0000000000001880)

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