

# Poor vision and falls: A deadly combo for seniors

December 29 2023, by Ernie Mundell

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Seniors with vision issues are at much higher risk for dangerous falls, new research confirms.

Compared to [seniors](#) with good vision, the odds for a fall rose by 38%

for seniors with glaucoma, 36% for those with [cataracts](#) and 25% for seniors with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), say a team reporting Dec. 28 in the journal [JAMA Ophthalmology](#).

Worldwide, over 650,000 people lose their lives to falls each year, the research team noted, and falls can be especially deadly for the frail elderly. In the United States, [medical costs](#) for falls top more than \$23 billion annually.

Impaired vision is an obvious risk factor for falling, and a team at the University of Manchester in the U.K. wanted to quantify that risk.

They looked at data on vision health, falls, and fractures from a national British database on over 410,000 people. Participants were typically in their 70s at the time of the study.

Besides the increased risk of falls associated with various vision ailments, the study also found a rise in the risk of [bone fractures](#).

Compared to their peers with good vision, folks with glaucoma had a 31% higher odds for a fracture, those with cataracts had a 28% increased risk, and people with AMD faced an 18% higher risk, the Manchester group found.

Injuries included fractures of the hip, spine, forearm, skull or facial bones, pelvis, ribs or sternum, and lower legs.

While impaired vision upped the risk for these injuries, "the majority of these eye diseases are preventable or treatable," noted the team, which was led by Jung Yin Tsang, of the university's Centre for Primary Care and Health Services Research.

Regular eye exams may be crucial for seniors since "in early stages of

eye disease, patients are often asymptomatic and unaware of [visual impairment](#)," the researchers noted.

Besides getting [early diagnosis](#) and treatment of vision issues, seniors with AMD, cataracts or glaucoma may also "benefit from improved advice, access and referrals to falls prevention services," Tsang's group added.

**More information:** Jung Yin Tsang et al, Risk of Falls and Fractures in Individuals With Cataract, Age-Related Macular Degeneration, or Glaucoma, *JAMA Ophthalmology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamaophthalmol.2023.5858](#)

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