

POWERED BY EyeMed

# A critical driver of success

## Why the Eye Exam for Diabetics (EED) measure matters more than ever in Medicare Advantage

INTRODUCTION

# A closer look at the Eye Exam for Diabetics measure

As Medicare Advantage (MA) plans navigate rising expectations around quality, outcomes and Star Ratings performance, the Eye Exam for Diabetics (EED) measure has emerged as a critical driver of success.

The EED measure's relative value has increased by ~23% after the release of the 2027 CMS Final Rule further elevating its impact on overall ratings.

Recent CMS changes are shifting the program towards the importance of preventive and clinical outcomes, while raising performance thresholds across measures. **At the same time, diabetes prevalence continues to grow – particularly among older adults – making early detection and routine monitoring more important than ever.**

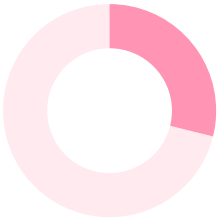


**This whitepaper explores:**

- The prevalence and impact of diabetes in the Medicare population
- The clinical importance of diabetic eye exams
- How CMS policy changes are elevating the EED measure
- How EyeMed supports plans in closing care gaps and improving outcomes

# The growing impact of diabetes in the Medicare population

Diabetes is one of the most prevalent chronic conditions in the United States, affecting more than 40 million Americans, or approximately 12% of the population.[1]



The burden is even higher among older adults. **Nearly 29% of U.S. adults age 65 and older are living with diabetes**, making it a central concern for Medicare Advantage populations.[1]

**Diabetes is also associated with a wide range of complications**, including heart disease, kidney failure and vision loss.[2] For MA plans, this means diabetes is not just prevalent – it is a primary driver of both cost and quality performance.



[1] "National Diabetes Statistics Report"; CDC; January 2026.
[2] "CMS Diabetes Strategy"; CMS; 2024.

## Why eye exams are critical to diabetes management

One of the most serious complications of diabetes is diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of vision loss among adults.[3] The challenge is that diabetic eye disease often develops without early symptoms, making routine screening essential for early detection.[4]

**Regular, comprehensive eye exams allow providers to:**

- Detect diabetic retinopathy in its early stages
- Initiate treatment before vision loss occurs
- Provide critical insights that support broader care management



**This early intervention is highly effective**

MORE THAN 90%

of diabetes-related vision loss can be prevented with early detection and treatment[5]

**Despite this, gaps persist**

~60%

of people with diabetes do not receive annual eye exams, highlighting a significant opportunity for intervention[5]

[3] "Diabetic retinopathy: Screening, Treatment, and Trends"; American Academy of Ophthalmology; January 2024.
[4] "Diabetic Retinopathy Screening"; Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine; August 2024.
[5] "Promoting Eye Health"; CDC; May 2024.



THE EED MEASURE

# A critical indicator of quality care

The Eye Exam for Diabetics (EED) measure evaluates whether members with diabetes receive appropriate retinal screening. Because of the direct link between early detection and improved outcomes, this measure is widely recognized as a key indicator of:

- Preventive care engagement
- Care coordination
- Population health performance

Improving EED performance helps plans reduce avoidable complications while improving both clinical outcomes and member experience.

## The stars ratings shift: increased value of clinical measures

**CMS policy shifts have increased the relative value of the EED measure by ~23%.** This material increase is driven by the elimination of 11 administrative and low-variance measures, making plan performance on remaining clinical measures significantly more consequential than in prior years. This adjustment is part of a broader shift toward rewarding outcomes and closing care gaps, with greater emphasis placed on screening and chronic condition management.[6]

**At the same time, CMS has raised performance expectations across many measures, requiring higher levels of performance to achieve 4- and 5-star ratings.**[7] In this environment, EED emerges as a critical strategic lever. As CMS noted in its Final Rule commentary, the EED measure is "clinically distinct and non-duplicative, serving as "a window into overall health beyond just diabetes management."[6]

**Performance on the EED measure now directly impacts:**

- Overall Star Ratings
- Bonus payments
- Competitive positioning



[6] "2024 Medicare Advantage Final Rule"; CMS; April 2023.
[7] "Medicare Advantage Star Ratings Changes"; Wakely; 2024.

THE CHALLENGE

# Access alone is not enough

Most MA plans already offer strong access to vision care. Routine eye exams are widely covered as a preventive benefit, often with minimal or no cost sharing.

However, despite this access, screening rates remain suboptimal.



**This highlights a key challenge for plans:** access does not automatically translate to utilization

**To improve EED performance, plans must go beyond benefit design and focus on:**

- Member awareness and education
- Simplified care navigation
- Targeted outreach to high-risk populations
- Strong provider engagement and data capture

[8] "EyeMed Book of Business"; EyeMed; 2025.

## HOW EYEMED SUPPORTS PLANS IN CLOSING CARE GAPS

EyeMed partners with health plans to improve quality performance, enhance member experience and close gaps in care. **Today, EyeMed supports approximately 37% of all Medicare Advantage members in the United States**, providing scale and expertise in serving this population.[8]

## EYEMED'S CAPABILITIES INCLUDE:



### QUALITY PROGRAMS

- Targeted outreach and engagement campaigns
- Focus on high-risk populations, including members with diabetes



### PROVIDER NETWORK ACCESS

- Nationwide network supporting routine and medical eye care
- Strong provider alignment to support screening and follow-up



### DATA AND REPORTING SUPPORT

- Robust claims and encounter capture
- Support for accurate documentation and quality reporting



### MEMBER EXPERIENCE TOOLS

- Tools that help members find providers and access care more easily
- Simplified pathways to increase preventive exam utilization

CONCLUSION

# A strategic imperative for Medicare Advantage plans

The Eye Exam for Diabetics measure represents a critical intersection of clinical quality, member engagement and financial performance.

With diabetes prevalence remaining high among Medicare populations and CMS continuing to raise expectations for care quality, improving EED performance is no longer optional – it is essential.

Plans that invest in engagement, access and strong partnerships will be best positioned to improve outcomes and succeed in an increasingly competitive MA landscape.



To learn more about the EED and the Medicare Advantage landscape, contact your EyeMed account representative

WP-2609-SP-2384