

# Prescription wearers to get Google Glass (Update)

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A visitor of the "NEXT Berlin" conference tries out the Google Glass on April 24, 2013 in Berlin

Google's Internet-connected eyewear Glass is coming to people who need prescriptions to correct their vision.

New spectacles from Google's design team will be compatible with corrective lenses and, thanks to a collaboration with a private insurer, may get some reimbursement from health plans.

"This announcement marks the next step in Glass's evolution and the

beginning of a new category of smart eyewear," the firm said.

The tech giant unveiled a partnership with US vision insurer VSP to make prescription Glass and to reimburse some of the costs under health benefits.

"If we had a nickel for every time someone has asked about prescription lenses for Glass... well, we'd have a lot of nickels," said a Google Glass blog post that displayed four lightweight styles.

The new frames will sell for \$225, and in some cases users can get reimbursed under their health plan, according to Google.

That does not include the \$1,500 price for Google Glass, which is in a test phase with a small number of "explorers" ahead of a wider release sometime this year.

Google said the current explorers can have their Glass fitted with prescription lenses or get newly designed frames.

The Glass team designed four new frames called Bold, Curve, Thin, and Split, and two new shades, or detachable sunglasses.

VSP president Jim McGrann said his firm provides cover to 64 million customers—one in five Americans—and would help train and certify retailers as well as reimbursing policy holders.

Google repeated that it is moving towards "a wider consumer launch later in 2014" of Glass.

But the new frames will be available starting Tuesday to the Glass testers.

Glass connects to the Internet using Wi-Fi hot spots or, more typically, by being wirelessly tethered to mobile phones. Pictures or video are may be shared through the Google Plus social network.

During the testing phase, developers are creating apps for the eyewear, which can range from getting weather reports to sharing videos to playing games.

Rob Enderle, analyst at Enderle Group, said he believed the new versions of the eyewear will be "less geeky than the prototype" to appeal to more users.

"This will make the product far less obvious while it also makes it more useful to those that wear glasses, thus it should improve adoption," Enderle told AFP.

Still Enderle said Glass has privacy obstacles to overcome, noting that it "makes people uncomfortable," because the devices appear to be capable of recording what they view.

Avi Greengart, who follows the mobile sector at the research firm Current Analysis, said in a tweet that "adding prescription options for Glass will only be relevant once Glass itself costs less and has a clear use case."

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