
Improving Quality of Life



January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

What is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma causes loss of sight by damaging a part of the eye called the optic nerve. Once this damage occurs, you begin to lose patches of vision, usually side (peripheral) vision. Over time, glaucoma may also damage straight ahead (central) vision. Glaucoma is often called “the sneak thief of sight” because people usually do not notice any signs of the disease until they have already lost significant vision.



Types of Glaucoma

Chronic (Open Angle) Glaucoma is the most common type and occurs when fluid within the eye drains too slowly and pressure inside the eye builds up. It is usually the result of aging, but younger people can also get it.

Normal Tension Glaucoma is not related to high pressure, but rather seems to occur in people that are unusually sensitive to *normal* levels of pressure.

Acute (Angle Closure) Glaucoma causes a sudden rise in pressure, requiring immediate, emergency medical care. The signs of this type of glaucoma include blurred vision, severe headache, eye pain, nausea and/or seeing rainbow-like halos around lights. This condition is more common in people of Asian and Native American descent.

Secondary Glaucoma comes from certain diseases that damage the eye’s drainage system, such as diabetes, leukemia, sickle-cell anemia, cataracts, blood vessel impairment, eye injuries or eye inflammation.

Who is at risk for Glaucoma?

- Age- The older you are, the greater your risk.
- Race- African-Americans have 4-5 times greater risk and likely to have at a younger age.
- Family History- If you have a parent or sibling with glaucoma, your risk is higher.
- Medical History- Diabetes, previous eye injuries, or certain medications may increase your risk.

What is the treatment for Glaucoma?

At present, there is no cure for glaucoma. However, eye drops, medications and/or surgery can help control the disease and new treatments may soon be available. Early diagnosis gives you the best chance of successful treatment, so remember to:

- ✓ Have regular exams with an eye doctor
- ✓ Tell the eye doctor about any changes in your physical condition or medications
- ✓ Be aware of your own risk factors for glaucoma
- ✓ Learn all you can about glaucoma

Anyone can get glaucoma. It affects 1 in 200 people age 50 and younger, and the rate increases to 1 in 10 over the age of 80!



SOURCE: Prevent Blindness America
www.preventblindness.org

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