

Glaucoma

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Glaucoma is an eye disease that affects 2 million people in the United States. Researchers found that the overall annual incidence rate of open-angle glaucoma in a predominantly Caucasian population is conservatively estimated to be 14.5 per 100,000 population. The rates increased with age from 1.6 for people in their 40s to 94.3 in their 80s. Glaucoma is an age-related disorder that causes vision loss due to an increase in pressure within the eye (intraocular pressure). It is the second leading cause of blindness in the United States. Anyone can develop glaucoma. Some people are at higher risk than others, including:

- African Americans over age 40;
- Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans;
- People with a family history of glaucoma.

Open-angle glaucoma, the most common kind, occurs due to the chronic blockage of normal fluid circulation within the eye. Increased pressure within the eye can cause damage to the optic nerve and eventual blindness, if untreated. Without treatment, people with glaucoma will gradually lose their side (peripheral) vision. Increased intraocular pressure, by itself, is not called glaucoma, but can lead to glaucoma if the optic nerve is damaged. Symptoms do not appear until late in the disease, which is the reason regular eye examinations for older people are worthwhile, even if they are not having problems. There is no prevention or cure for glaucoma, but early diagnosis and treatment will slow the progression of the disease, and can save your sight.

Detection is made through a comprehensive eye exam, which will include: Visual acuity test (eye chart), visual field test for peripheral vision, tonometry — a test to measure the pressure inside the eye, and a dilated eye exam using eye drops to permit direct examination of the retina and optic nerves using a special magnifying lens.

Treatment consists of medicines in the form of eye drops or pills, and surgery, in advanced cases. While these treatments may save remaining vision, they do not improve sight already lost from glaucoma.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

1. Have a comprehensive eye exam at least every two years if you are in any of the high-risk groups described above.
2. If you are being treated for glaucoma, be sure to take your glaucoma medicine every day. Remember, lowering eye pressure in glaucoma's early stages slows progression of the disease and helps save vision.
3. Help protect the vision of family members and friends who may be at high risk for glaucoma by sharing this information with them.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight.

II Corinthians 5:5-7