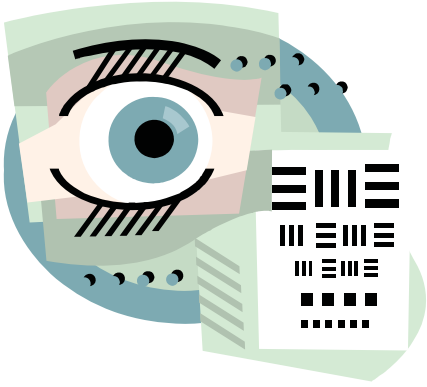


AGING AND VISION LOSS: GLAUCOMA



Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world and is **six** to **eight** times more common among African-Americans. If glaucoma is diagnosed and treated early, the chances of significant vision loss or blindness are greatly reduced.

Glaucoma is a disease where pressure within the eye is so high that it can damage the optic nerve and lead to vision loss. Diagnosis is the first step in preserving your vision.

Within a normal eye, the lens and cornea are continually bathed in a thin clear fluid. After circulating, the fluid drains out through special channels. Glaucoma results when this fluid no longer drains properly and pressure builds up in the eye. If the pressure is not controlled, it eventually destroys cells in the optic nerve. How much pressure it takes to damage the optic nerve varies from person to person. Vision begins to blur, the visual field narrows, and ultimately, total blindness results. Glaucoma affects side vision long before central vision is affected, which is why this “silent thief of sight”, as it is sometimes described, frequently goes undetected.

There are four basic types of glaucoma. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, more than 90 percent of adult glaucoma patients have **chronic open angle glaucoma**. This type of glaucoma develops gradually, as the drainage portion of the eye becomes less efficient. Often symptom-less, it is usually detected during routine eye examinations.

Acute closed angle glaucoma, which occurs less frequently, is an emergency condition that develops suddenly and is usually characterized by blurred vision, severe eye pain, headache, rainbow haloes around lights, nausea and vomiting.

Secondary glaucoma occurs because of something else that happened to the eye, (e.g. injury, inflammation, or disease).

Congenital glaucoma is present at birth. In addition to these four basic types of glaucoma there is also a rare condition known as **Normal tension glaucoma**, where glaucoma develops even though the intraocular pressure is not consistently elevated.

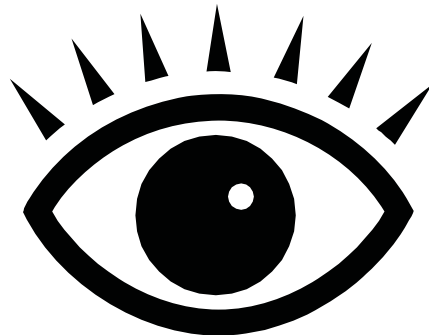
According to Prevent Blindness America, of the nearly **two million** Americans over the age of 40 who have glaucoma, more than **500,000** are African-Americans. In addition, glaucoma can develop at an earlier age among African-Americans and be more difficult to treat.

Apart from African ancestry, other risk factors include a family history of glaucoma or diabetes, advancing age, extreme nearsightedness, past eye injuries, diabetes, and taking steroid medications for a long time. The most important action anyone at risk can take is to have regular, comprehensive eye examinations.

Although glaucoma cannot yet be prevented, it can usually be stopped and controlled with treatment and medication. Unfortunately, vision that has been destroyed cannot be restored. Treatment is based upon an individual person's medical history and eye exam, and may include special eye drops or medicine, laser treatment, or in some cases surgery.

If significant vision loss has occurred as a result of glaucoma, vision rehabilitation may be helpful. The goal is to enhance remaining sight so that an individual can continue to do routine tasks and reach meaningful personal goals, (e.g. reading, sewing, television viewing). The process of vision rehabilitation involves an assessment of functional vision and training in new visual skills with special adaptive vision devices.

Additional services are available to help adjust to vision loss and maintain independence at home and in the community.



For more information

To learn more about glaucoma, vision loss or vision rehabilitation, talk to your eye physician or CSBPS professional staff, or contact one of the following organizations:

Prevent Blindness America

211 W. Wacker Dr.

Ste. 1700

Chicago, IL 60606

1-800-331-2020

<http://www.preventblindness.org/>

Lighthouse National Center for Vision and Aging

The Lighthouse Inc.

111 E 59th Street

New York, NY 10022

1-800-334-5497

<http://www.lighthouse.org/>

Glaucoma Research Foundation

251 Post St.

Ste. 600

San Francisco, CA 94108

800-826-6693

<http://www.glaucoma.org/>



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www.SightConnection.com or call (800) 458-4888, 9 AM - 5 PM, M-F

C•S•B•P•S

Programs and Services

- Low vision clinic and low vision rehabilitation
- Instruction in independent living skills
- Professional counseling and support groups
- Safe travel and orientation training
- Education, information and referral services
- Assistive Technology resources
- Adaptive aids specialty store, SightConnection

Since 1965, our mission has been to work with individuals, families and communities to restore, maintain and enhance the independence and well being of people with impaired vision.

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Adaptive Aids Store: www.SightConnection.com

Agency hours: 8 AM – 5 PM, M-F

SightConnection Store hours: 9 AM - 5 PM, M-F

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