

Healthy Habits

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

For millions of Americans, the threat of vision loss is all too real. However, only half of them are aware that they have a potentially blinding eye disease. Glaucoma, is a leading cause of blindness in the world, second only to cataracts, and the leading cause of blindness for African-Americans. Left untreated, glaucoma can lead to damage of the optic nerve, visual field loss, and ultimately sight loss. It begins by destroying peripheral vision and, over time, can cause complete blindness. The “sneak thief of sight” has no warning signs until sight has already been diminished. Once sight has been lost to glaucoma, it cannot be restored.

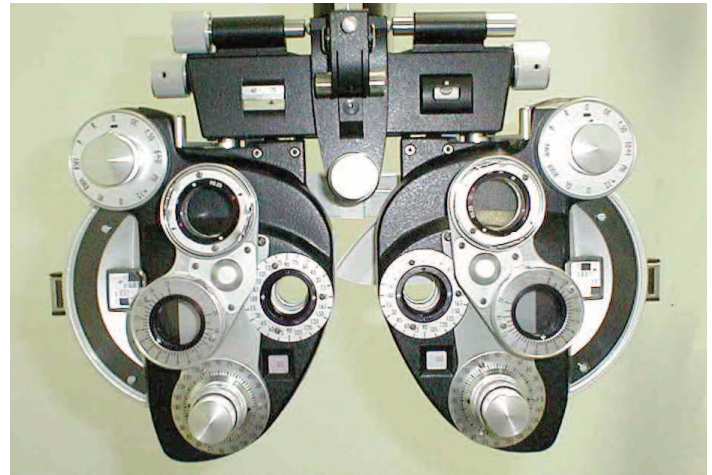
What Is Glaucoma?

Chronic (Open Angle) Glaucoma is the most common type. In open angle glaucoma, pressure inside the eye builds up due to poor drainage. It usually results from aging of the drainage channel, which doesn't work as well over time but has been found in younger people, as well.

Normal Tension Glaucoma is a form of open angle glaucoma not related to high pressure. People with normal tension glaucoma may be unusually sensitive to normal levels of pressure. Reduced blood supply to the optic nerve may also play a role in normal tension glaucoma.

Acute (Angle Closure) Glaucoma occurs in less than 10 percent of Caucasians or African-Americans, but for those of Asian and Native American descent, the risks are as high as for open angle glaucoma. Hispanics are midway between these groups. It causes a sudden rise in pressure, requiring immediate, emergency medical care. The signs are usually serious and may include blurred vision, severe headaches, eye pain, nausea, vomiting or seeing rainbow-like halos around lights. Occasionally, the condition may be without symptoms; similar to open angle.

The material contained in Healthy Habits is not intended to be medical advice on any particular matter. Readers should seek appropriate professional advice before acting on the basis of any information contained in this publication. This information is provided courtesy of Optima Health.



Regular eye exams are your best bet to stop or stem the loss of vision due to glaucoma. Don't lose your eyes to the “sneak thief of sight”.

Could you be letting your sight slip away?

Glaucoma is especially dangerous because it slowly takes away vision, often without the patient even realizing it. People with glaucoma usually notice the loss of peripheral vision first but without treatment and proper follow up, glaucoma may also damage central vision. In these cases, by the time that symptoms are detected, the effectiveness of treatment diminishes. Regular eye exams are the best weapon against glaucoma

“We can't stress enough how vitally important it is to have your eyes examined by a professional to protect sight,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. “There's no cure for glaucoma yet, but treatment can be effective if glaucoma is detected and treated early.”

Resources such as “The Glaucoma Learning Center” located at preventblindness.org/glaucoma, and the Health Information Library at OptimaHealth.com can also provide you with a wealth of knowledge about this disease, how to identify it and how to slow or prevent its onset.

Don't let glaucoma keep you in the dark.