

Glaucoma can take your sight away.



Keep Vision in Your Future.

Glaucoma: What You Need To Know

- Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the optic nerve of the eye. Primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG) is the most common form. It often has no warning signs and, if left untreated, can result in permanent vision loss or blindness.
- Glaucoma treatments include medicines, laser surgery, conventional surgery, or a combination of any of these. While these treatments may save remaining vision, they do not improve sight already lost from glaucoma.
- More than 70 percent of Americans reported loss of eyesight as 10 on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being the worst thing that could happen to them.¹
- An estimated 2.2 million Americans have been diagnosed with POAG. An additional 2 million Americans have glaucoma and don't know it.²
- Whites (95%) and African Americans (94%) reported having heard of glaucoma more often than Hispanics/Latinos (61%) and Asians (72%).¹
- Of the 90 percent of the population 18 years and older who reported having heard of glaucoma, the majority of the population knew that glaucoma can cause vision loss (92%), glaucoma can be treated (86%), and that vision loss from glaucoma can be prevented (67%). However, only 8 percent reported knowing that there are no early warning signs for glaucoma.¹
- It is estimated that the number of people who have glaucoma will increase 50 percent by 2020, largely because of the aging of the U.S. population.³
- People at higher risk for glaucoma should have a dilated eye examination every one to two years. People at higher risk include the following:
 - » African Americans over the age of 40
 - » Everyone over the age of 60, especially Mexican Americans
 - » People with a family history of glaucoma
- African Americans (76%) reported having their eyes examined by an eye care professional less often than Hispanics/Latinos (80%), Asians (84%), and Whites (86%).¹
- More people 55 years and older (91%) than people 18 to 54 years (67%) reported having their eyes dilated, and more women (79%) than men (68%) reported having had a dilated eye exam.¹

- More Whites (78%) reported receiving a dilated eye exam than Asians (73%), African Americans (66%), and Hispanics/Latinos (54%).¹
- Glaucoma is three times more likely to occur in African Americans than in Whites.³ It is also about four times more likely to cause blindness in African Americans than in Whites.⁴
- The prevalence of POAG among Hispanics/Latinos is nearly 5 percent. This rate increases with age from about 8 percent for those in their 60s to 15 percent for those in their 70s.⁵
- More people 18 years and older (79%) reported receiving follow-up care for glaucoma than any other eye condition or disease.¹
- For glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, men reported receiving follow-up care more often than women.¹

¹National Eye Institute and Lions Clubs International Foundation. (2006). Knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding eye health and disease: Results of a national telephone survey. Unpublished data. Bethesda, MD: National Eye Institute.

²Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Eye Institute. (2004). National plan for eye and vision research. Retrieved October 4, 2006, from www.nei.nih.gov/strategicplanning/np_index.asp

³The Eye Disease Prevalence Research Group. (2004). Prevalence of open-angle glaucoma among adults in the United States. *Archives of Ophthalmology*, 122, 532–538.

⁴The Eye Disease Prevalence Research Group. (2004). Causes and prevalence of visual impairment among adults in the United States. *Archives of Ophthalmology*, 122, 477–485.

⁵Varma, R., Ying-Lai, M., Francis, B. A., Nguyen, B. B., Deneen, J., Wilson, M. R., et al.; Los Angeles Latino Eye Study Group. (2004). Prevalence of open-angle glaucoma and ocular hypertension in Latinos: The Los Angeles Latino Eye Study. *Ophthalmology*, 111, 1439–1448.

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Educating Your Community About Glaucoma

Incorporate Glaucoma Education into Your Organization's Activities

Community-wide and individual activities, programs, and workshops are effective ways to educate those at higher risk for developing the disease and their loved ones about glaucoma and the importance of getting dilated eye exams. You can play an important role in helping reduce visual impairment resulting from glaucoma by sharing NEI messages and materials with members of your community. Every effort, large or small, makes a difference. The following list provides ideas for activities that can be customized to meet your organization's needs.

Community eye care and healthcare professionals can take the lead.

- » Provide vision education materials, including NEI brochures, to patients and their families. Glaucoma education materials are available at www.nei.nih.gov/glaucomaeducation.
- » Arrange for eye care professionals and other healthcare professionals to speak about the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams and the Medicare benefit that covers these exams at civic, employee, cultural, faith, and fraternal events.
- » Distribute brochures or other materials at health clinics, health fairs, and other health-promotion events.
- » Include a newsletter or newspaper article about glaucoma in your health maintenance organization (HMO), insurance provider, or eye health patient and consumer publications, or post it on your Intranet or Website.
- » Display postcards and brochures anywhere people at higher risk for glaucoma will view them.
- » Play a prerecorded glaucoma radio public service announcement (PSA) for callers who are put on hold by health clinics, insurance companies, or hospitals.
- » Display brochures and place inserts in prescription bags.
- » Use a glaucoma print PSA on store receipts.

Faith communities can get families involved.

- » Include glaucoma print PSAs and/or a newsletter article in the publication of your faith group.
- » After faith services or social events, display information about the importance of getting comprehensive dilated eye exams for early detection of glaucoma.

- » Host events that can help raise awareness, such as a walking tour, mini-golf tournament, car wash, bicycle ride, or chess tournament.
- » Arrange for faith-community volunteers to remind people who are at risk of glaucoma when they are due for a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Encourage them to provide transportation for visits to eye care professionals for these exams.

Community leaders can raise awareness.

- » Issue a proclamation about the importance of helping people at risk for glaucoma understand the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams to detect the disease before vision is lost. Proclaim “Glaucoma Outreach (Day, Week, or Month).”
- » Be a spokesperson. Local community leaders, celebrities, performers, or elected officials can help raise awareness by speaking about visual impairment resulting from glaucoma at council meetings, professional and civic gatherings, and community events.
- » Include statements about the effect of glaucoma on your community in press materials and speeches about health issues that concern older Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and African Americans.
- » Participate in events and activities intended to raise awareness about glaucoma, such as a read-a-thon using visual devices and large print materials.
- » Play PSAs on your radio or television station and arrange for spokespersons to appear on your community talk shows.
- » In your newspaper or newsletter, print articles about glaucoma and the importance of timely treatment.

Special events can reach new people.

- » Take advantage of community events such as local health fairs, parades, festivals, sports events, and walk-for-health events. Focus on special events and festivals that attract people at higher risk for glaucoma.
- » Keep a sign up list at your exhibit or booth and offer to send reminder cards to people to make an appointment for a comprehensive dilated eye exam for themselves or a loved one.

Employers can support employees and families.

- » Establish a glaucoma information center in your employee cafeteria, personnel office, or health center using the brochures available on the NEI Website.
- » Offer incentives for employees who are at higher risk for glaucoma to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam every one to two years. An incentive could be time off at company expense to get the exams from a nearby eye care professional, or for

the company to offset the portion of the cost not paid by insurance or Medicare.

- » Distribute glaucoma brochures at annual employee health seminars and include this information at preretirement planning workshops.
- » Include an eye exam benefit in your health insurance program for employees who are at higher risk for glaucoma and who are not covered by the Medicare benefit.
- » Distribute glaucoma brochures with employee paychecks so they can pass it along to family members or friends who are at risk.
- » Include a glaucoma article in your company newsletter.

Businesses can support community-wide efforts.

- » If your business has printing capabilities, offer to print glaucoma materials. Include the name of your business on the materials.
- » Include glaucoma PSAs in community coupon mailers, shopping circulars, and your community phone book.
- » Put glaucoma messages into people's hands through inserts in utility bills and bank statements.
- » Print glaucoma messages on restaurant receipts, placemats, take-out food containers, and cups.
- » Play glaucoma radio PSAs on your public audio systems.
- » Place a glaucoma newsletter article in your company or customer newsletter.
- » Sponsor a health fair, make room for an exhibit, or provide space for a table or booth to distribute glaucoma brochures and other information about glaucoma.

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