



# Glaucoma: Early Detection Means Vision Protection

A silent disease is taking away the sight of millions of Americans. It's called glaucoma and it can slowly reduce eyesight and may cause blindness.

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the optic nerve. The most common form is primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG). An estimated 2.2 million Americans have been diagnosed with POAG, and an additional 2 million have glaucoma and don't know it.

There are often no symptoms or pain associated with the onset of glaucoma. As it progresses, a person may notice his or her side vision decreasing. As glaucoma worsens, the field of vision narrows and blindness may result.

Glaucoma can be detected through a dilated eye exam. A dilated eye exam allows an eye care professional to see inside the eye to check for signs of glaucoma and other vision problems. Treatment options for glaucoma include medicines, laser surgery, conventional surgery, or a combination of any of these.

While anyone can get glaucoma, the National Eye Institute (NEI) encourages those at higher risk to get a dilated eye exam every one to two years. Individuals at higher

risk include African Americans over age 40; everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans; and people with a family history of glaucoma. NEI, one of the Federal government's National Institutes of Health, conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatments and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment.

For more information about glaucoma, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at <http://healthyvision2010.nei.nih.gov/index.asp>.