

2012 GLAUCOMA FACT SHEET

- The 2008 update to Prevent Blindness America's *Vision Problems in the U.S.* report states that close to 2.3 million Americans age 40 and older, or about 1.9 percent of that population, have glaucoma.
- Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world after cataracts, (according to the World Health Organization), and the leading cause of blindness in African-Americans (according to the National Institutes of Health).
- Glaucoma often occurs earlier in life in African-Americans—on average, about 10 years earlier than in other ethnic populations (Glaucoma Research Foundation)
- Glaucoma, the leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide affecting approximately 70 million people (Thylefors B, Ne'grel AD, Pararajasegaram R, Dadzie KY. Global data on blindness. Bulletin World Health Organ. 1995;73:115–121.)
- An eye evaluation can uncover evidence of many forms of systemic disease that affect the eyes, like hypertension and diabetes. (American Academy of Ophthalmology)
- Prevent Blindness America's 2007 research study, "*The Economic Impact of Vision Problems*" states that glaucoma costs the U.S. economy \$2.86 billion every year in direct medical costs for outpatient, inpatient and prescription drug services.
- The same study found that glaucoma patients between the ages of 40 and 64 years of age can expect to pay \$3,352 annually per person in direct medical costs for outpatient, inpatient and prescription drug services. For those 65 and older, the annual costs jump to \$5,243 per person.
- While open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of glaucoma among Hispanics, Caucasians and African Americans, another form of glaucoma known as acute angle-closure glaucoma has traditionally been more common in certain Asian populations and Americans of Asian descent. (Glaucoma Research Foundation)
- Juvenile open angle glaucoma (JOAG) is a rare form of glaucoma that accounts for approximately one percent of total cases. The clinical features of JOAG are the same as those of more common forms of glaucoma.
- Approximately 120,000 people are blind from glaucoma, accounting for 9-12 percent of all cases of blindness in the U.S. (National Eye Health Program/National Institutes of Health).
- In the early stages, glaucoma has no symptoms, no noticeable vision loss, no pain, which is why it is called the "sneak thief of sight." By the time symptoms start to appear, some permanent damage to the eye has usually occurred.

- Glaucoma that is undiagnosed or poorly controlled can lead to damage of the optic nerve, visual field loss and ultimately sight loss. People with glaucoma usually lose peripheral vision first. Over time, glaucoma may also damage central vision. Once lost, vision cannot be restored.
- Prevent Blindness America recommends that older people get regular, comprehensive eye exams, even if they have no signs of vision problems. The earlier glaucoma is detected, the better the chances are of preserving sight.
- Prevent Blindness America, with support from Alcon, Inc., provides “The Glaucoma Learning Center,” a comprehensive online tool to educate consumers on a variety of topics related to the disease at www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma.
- Everyone is at risk for glaucoma from young to old. Although older people are at higher risk, approximately 1 out of every 10,000 babies born in the United States is diagnosed with the disease (according to the Glaucoma Research Foundation).

Glaucoma Risk Factors

- **Age:** Those that are 40 and older are more likely to develop glaucoma. The older you are, the greater your risk.
- **Race:** People of African or Afro-Caribbean heritage are more likely to get glaucoma than the rest of the population. They are also more likely to develop glaucoma at a younger age.
- **Family History:** If you have a parent or sibling who has glaucoma, you are more likely to develop the disease.
- **Diabetes:** People with diabetes have a higher risk (40 percent) of developing glaucoma.
- **Nearsightedness:** People who are very nearsighted are at greater risk.
- **Eye Injury or Surgery:** Those who have had eye surgery or eye injuries may develop secondary glaucoma.
- **Steroid Medication:** Steroids may increase the risk of glaucoma when used for extended periods of time.

Types of Glaucoma:

Chronic (Open Angle) Glaucoma: This is the most common type. In open angle glaucoma, aqueous fluid drains too slowly and pressure inside the eye builds up. It usually results from aging of the drainage channel, which doesn't work as well over time. However, younger people can also get this type of glaucoma.

Normal Tension Glaucoma: This 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: This causes a sudden rise in eye 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.

Secondary Glaucoma: Another 10 percent of glaucoma cases come from certain diseases and conditions that damage the eye's drainage system. These include diabetes, leukemia, sickle-cell anemia, some forms of arthritis, cataracts, eye injuries or inflammation of the eye, steroid drug use and growth of unhealthy blood vessels.

Post-surgical Glaucoma: Some surgeries, such as retinal reattachments, increase the chance of getting glaucoma.