

Golden Topics

Presented by the experts at Wexner Heritage Village



January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

January is recognized as Glaucoma Awareness Month. Glaucoma is a condition where the optic nerve of the eye is damaged, usually as a result of high pressure on the nerve due to poor draining of eye fluids. It is one of the leading causes of blindness in the United States.

Those at a higher risk of developing glaucoma include adults over age 60, diabetics and those with family history. African-Americans are at an even greater risk, especially past age 40.

In the majority of cases, there are few or no symptoms in glaucoma's early stages. As the condition progresses, a person will slowly lose peripheral vision. Without treatment, glaucoma will then cause blindness. Loss of eyesight due to glaucoma is non-recoverable.

While glaucoma typically develops slowly, a sudden onset can occur when the flow of eye fluid becomes completely blocked. This is accompanied by severe, painful pressure in the eye, redness, blurred vision and nausea. A person experiencing these symptoms should visit a clinic or hospital immediately.

Quick Facts

Certain factors can increase a person's risks for developing glaucoma:

- **Age:** The older you are, the greater your risk.
- **Race:** People of African or Afro-Caribbean heritage have glaucoma four to five times more often than the rest of the population. They are also 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 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.

Source: www.preventblindness.org

Glaucoma can develop in one or both eyes. Treatments are available to slow the progression of the condition. With early treatment serious vision loss can be prevented.

Early detection is crucial. For the average person over age 60, comprehensive eye exams should be routinely performed every two years. Those with family history of eye problems

or other risk factors may need to be examined more frequently.

Information for this article was obtained from www.preventblindness.org. Prevent Blindness America also maintains a hotline to answer eye-sight questions. Call 1-800-331-2020.



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