

Glaucoma Statistics

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steals sight without warning and often without symptoms. Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. This nerve acts like an electric cable containing over a million wires and is responsible for carrying the image we see to the brain. It was once thought that high intraocular pressure (IOP) was the main cause of this optic nerve damage. Although IOP is clearly a risk factor, we now know that other factors must also be involved since even people with "normal" IOP can experience vision loss from glaucoma. Glaucoma is a chronic disease. It must be treated for life. To date, its causes are not well understood and there is no cure.

Who is at risk?

- ü Everyone. Glaucoma can occur in people of all ages, from babies to older adults. The most important risk factors include:
 - ü Age – Everyone over 60 years
 - ü African Ancestry over 35 years
 - ü Family history of Glaucoma
 - ü Diabetes
 - ü Past eye injuries
 - ü Very nearsighted

Often, there are no early warning signs. A person with glaucoma may have normal vision and feel no pain. Many people who have glaucoma do not even know they have it. It is recommended that people at high risk for glaucoma receive a complete eye exam every one to two years. Early detection and treatment is very important in the management of glaucoma.

Glaucoma conditions and Management

- Studies show that early detection and treatment of glaucoma is the best way to control the disease and protect sight. Everyone should have regular, comprehensive eye exam.
- There are several forms of glaucoma, including primary open-angle, narrow-angle, congenital and normal tension (also called low tension).
- There is no cure for glaucoma, but it can be controlled. A treatment plan may include medications and surgery.

When should testing be done?

A person should have a dilated eye examination at age 35 and 40. After age 40, exams should be done every two to four years, and after age 60 one to two years. If a person is at high risk, an exam should be done every one to two years after age 35.

Human Impact

- Glaucoma impacts people of all ages from babies to older adults.
- It is estimated that up to 3 million Americans, age 40 and over, have glaucoma.¹
- A person can have glaucoma and not know it. It is estimated that in developed countries, about half of those with glaucoma do not know they have it. In the developing world, this rate is even higher.²
- Untreated, glaucoma is the second leading cause of vision loss in the world.^{1,2,3}
- Worldwide, the leading causes of blindness, in rank, are: age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and age-related cataracts.¹
- Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness in African-Americans than on average.⁴
- It is estimated that as many as 120,000 Americans are now blind from glaucoma.³

- While there is much research being done, vision loss and blindness due to glaucoma is still permanent.

Economic Impact

- Glaucoma accounts for over 7 million visits to physicians each year.¹
- Blindness from glaucoma is believed to impose significant costs annually on the U.S. government in Social Security benefits, lost tax revenues, and healthcare expenditures.⁵

Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF)

The Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) is the oldest national voluntary health organization dedicated to protecting the sight and independence of people with glaucoma through research and education. The GRF's ultimate goal is to cure glaucoma. For more information, please call 1-800-826-6693 or 1-415-986-3162, or visit www.glaucoma.org.

(Sources: ¹ Prevent Blindness American, ² Quigley, "Number of people with glaucoma worldwide", 1996;

³ National Eye Health Program/National Institutes of Health; ⁴ American Academy of Ophthalmology, ⁵NEI, Report of the Glaucoma Panel, Fall 1998)

The above text is from the Glaucoma Research Foundation, 490 Post Street, Suite 1427 – San Francisco, CA 94102
www.glaucoma.org.