



EQUAL HEALTH:

Monthly Informer

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KEEP YOUR EYES HEALTHY

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness among Blacks and Hispanics living in the U.S.

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Center for Health Disparities Research & Education
Community Outreach & Information Dissemination Core

Centers of **EX**cellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities, and Training program (Project **EXPORT**)

GLAUCOMA

What is GLAUCOMA?

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of diseases that can cause blindness. It affects particularly older persons. Glaucoma is more frequently associated with pressure in the eyes.

Glaucoma in Blacks, Hispanics and Whites

In the United States, Glaucoma is more common among Blacks of all ethnic origins and Hispanics of all races and the leading cause of blindness among African Americans and Hispanics. As a result more persons who are Black or Hispanic than persons who are non-Hispanic White, are blind from Glaucoma each year. The exact reason for this difference is unknown. One possible explanation for the higher number of racial and ethnic minorities with Glaucoma, suggested by some experts, is that generally Blacks and Hispanics have fewer yearly eye examinations than Whites.

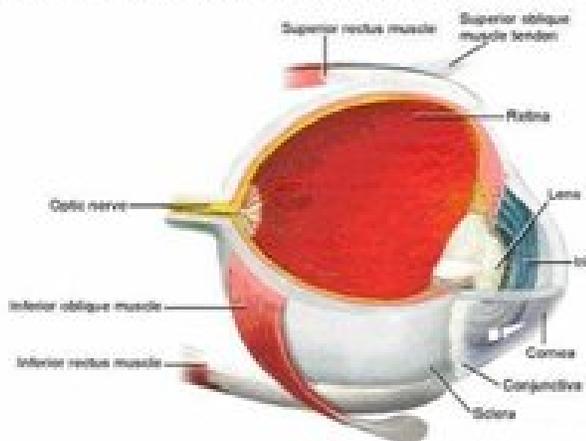
Glaucoma blindness can be prevented

Having your eyes examined once a year is the best way to prevent blindness from Glaucoma. A proper examination of the eyes allows the recognition of signs of the condition and an early diagnosis. When Glaucoma is diagnosed early it is treated with medications, usually prescription eye-drops, which can stop damage to the nerve inside the eye caused glaucoma, and prevent blindness. The eye-drops to treat glaucoma must be prescribed by a eye specialist medical doctor (ophthalmologist) after a careful examination.

Can you tell if you have Glaucoma?

Not when it is early. Eye and vision problems related to Glaucoma appear as the principal nerve of the eye,

the optic nerve, becomes injured. Some patients develop blind spots which gradually grow indicating that the amount of injured nerve is increasing. As more nerve is injured blindness appears and becomes worse.



Blindness from Glaucoma cannot be cured. Prevention and early diagnosis are the only ways to prevent blindness from glaucoma. It is important to have your eyes examined for glaucoma as part of your routine yearly physical examination. It is also important to have your eyes examined if you have any problem with your eyes or vision.

Beware of Serious Eye Problems

If you experience the sudden onset of the following signs you may need emergency medical attention:

- Loss of vision in one eye
- Hazy or blurred vision
- Flashes of light or black spots
- Rainbows or halos around light

Common Eye Problems

The following may be warning signs of eye problems and indicate the need for a professional eye examination:

1. If you see a dark spot at the center of what you are looking at.
2. If you begin seeing spots or ghost-like images or wiggles floating around in the air.
3. If you have trouble adjusting to the darkness when you walk into a dark room (walking into the movies after the lights are off).
4. If objects up-close or distant away look blurry and are difficult to see.
5. If you notice that you are becoming too sensitive to light or glare and you start squinting or blinking excessively when you are exposed to them.
6. If you notice a change in the color of your eyes where the colored part (iris) touches the white part (sclera).
7. Your eyelids become red-rimmed, encrusted or swollen.
8. If you experience recurrent pain in or around eyes.
9. If you start seeing double.
10. If lines and edges start to appear distorted or wavy.
11. If your eyes are frequently or always "watery."
12. If your eyes feel dry, are itchy or feel burning.

Tips for a better eye examination

1. Give as much information as possible about your symptoms and visual problems.
2. Ask questions.
3. Take notes about what you are told by the examiner and his or her assistants or staff at the clinic or office.
4. Don't leave with doubts about your condition or what you are supposed to do to take care of yourself.
5. Write down your next medical appointment and any special instructions on how to prepare for it.

Glaucoma Examination

A complete examination by an ophthalmologist will include a measurement of the eye pressure using a special instrument (tonometer) that gently touches the front of the eye. The examination also includes an inspection of the drainage angle of the eye (gonioscopy); evaluation of the inside of the eye, particularly the optic nerve (ophthalmoscopy); and a test of the visual field of each eye (perimetry).

If you are Diagnosed with Glaucoma

You must be examined regularly to evaluate your optic nerve and visual fields. These tests will help show how effective is the treatment you are receiving. Not all of these tests may be necessary for you every time you see the doctor. The reason for having regular eye examinations and some of these tests is to check that glaucoma under control by the medicines you are taking or if you need an additional or different treatment.

Mission of the Center

The Uniformed Services University Center for Health Disparities Research and Education (USUCHD) aims to promote health-related change and ultimately reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities through research, education, training, and community outreach and information dissemination.

Community Outreach and Information Dissemination Core

The core's general objective is to actively involve community partners in research, training opportunities, and educational offerings to maximize the understanding and reduction of health disparities in minority populations. This broad objective is achieved through multiple activities, including the extraction, synthesis and compilation of relevant materials and information from the other primary EXPORT Center Components. The activities respond to specific operational objectives established each year in response to the accumulated experience of the community outreach team, the health concerns and needs of our community partners and the Community Based Organization with whom we work collaboratively to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities.

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