

# Don't lose sight of Glaucoma

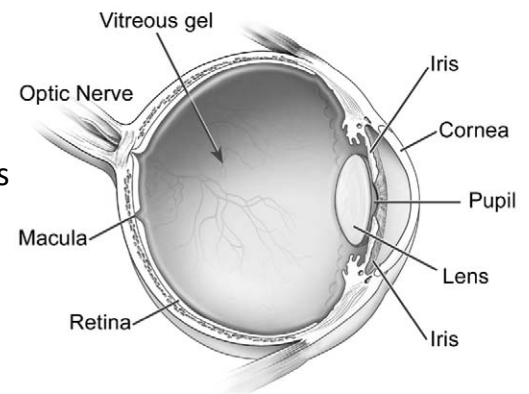


## Information for people at risk

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### What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can harm the optic nerve and cause vision loss or blindness. The optic nerve is a bundle of nerves that carry messages from the eye to the brain. The most common form of glaucoma is primary open-angle, which this informational flyer is about.



2

### What causes glaucoma?

At the front of the eye, there is a small space where clear fluid flows in and out. This clear fluid feeds nearby eye tissue. When the clear fluid flows too slowly, it creates pressure on the optic nerve. This pressure can harm the optic nerve and cause glaucoma and vision loss.

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### Who is most likely to get glaucoma?

Anyone can get glaucoma, but some people have a higher chance of getting it. People who have a higher chance are African Americans over the age of 40 and anyone over the age of 60 (especially Mexican Americans). If glaucoma runs in your family, you also have a higher chance of getting it.



Normal vision.



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with glaucoma.

4

### What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

In its early stages, many times there are no symptoms or pain. As glaucoma gets worse, you may slowly lose your side vision. If it remains untreated, you may miss objects to the side and out of the corner of your eye. It is like looking through a tunnel. Over time, straight-ahead vision may decrease until no vision remains.

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## How do you know if you have glaucoma?

An eye care professional can tell if you have glaucoma by giving you a comprehensive dilated eye exam. During the exam, drops are placed in your eyes to widen, or dilate, the pupils. Then a special lens is used to look at the optic nerve for damage. After the exam, your close-up vision may be blurry for a period of hours. You may also have a visual field test to check for changes in your side vision.

**6**

## How can glaucoma be treated?

Glaucoma cannot be cured, but it can be treated to keep it from getting worse. Catching it early is key to protecting your vision. Eye drops and medicine can help your eyes make less fluid or can help drain the fluid from the eye properly. Laser surgery can also make it easier for fluid to leave the eye. Regular surgery can make a new space where the fluid can drain.

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## What can you do to protect your vision?

Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every two years. This is more important if you are African American over age 40; are over age 60, especially if you are Mexican American; or have a family history of glaucoma. Finding and treating glaucoma early can help keep the disease from getting worse and reduce your risk of vision loss.

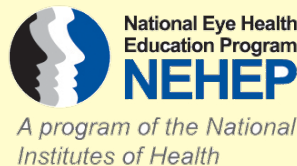
Medicare will help pay for an annual dilated eye exam for some people at high risk for glaucoma. This includes people with diabetes, people with a family history of glaucoma, and African Americans age 50 and older.



For more information, visit

<http://nei.nih.gov/glaucoma>

National Eye Institute  
National Institutes of Health



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