

Open Angle Glaucoma



Illinois Society for the
Prevention of Blindness



Glaucoma

MORE THAN 2.2 MILLION AMERICANS AGE 40 AND OLDER—NEARLY ONE IN 50—HAVE GLAUCOMA. THERE ARE MANY FORMS OF GLAUCOMA. THIS BROCHURE DEALS WITH THE MOST COMMON FORM, CALLED OPEN ANGLE GLAUCOMA.

YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BLINDNESS CAUSED BY GLAUCOMA IF YOU:
FIND OUT IF YOU ARE AT RISK FOR GLAUCOMA.
VISIT YOUR EYE DOCTOR REGULARLY.

Am I at risk for glaucoma?

You are more likely to get glaucoma if you:

- > are 55 or older
- > are black (if so, you are also more likely to get glaucoma at a younger age)
- > are Hispanic
- > are very nearsighted (myopic—distant objects are very blurry)
- > have a family history of glaucoma or a close relative with glaucoma (parents, brother, sister)
- > have a history of high pressure in your eyes
- > have had an eye injury or eye surgery
- > have taken steroids for long periods of time
- > have diabetes or high blood pressure

Even people who do not have these risk factors can get glaucoma.

If you are 55 or older, you should get a complete eye exam at least once every two years. If you have diabetes or other health problems, you may need to see an eye doctor more often.

When you have a complete eye exam, the eye doctor will check your eye pressure, check your side vision and do an optic nerve evaluation. The best way to evaluate the optic nerve is with a dilated eye exam.

During a dilated eye exam, the eye doctor widens the pupil of the eye with eye drops to allow a closer look at the inside of the eye. The exam is not painful, and it may not always be part of an eye exam for a new pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses. A dilated eye exam will allow your eye doctor to check for glaucoma and other eye diseases.



How does glaucoma damage my eyes?

Glaucoma causes loss of sight by damaging a part of the eye called the optic nerve. The optic nerve sends information from your eyes to your brain.

PRESSURE INSIDE THE EYE MAY PLAY A ROLE IN GLAUCOMA.

Your eye produces a watery fluid (aqueous humor) which goes into the eye and drains out.

Sometimes the fluid doesn't drain properly. It backs up, causing increased eye pressure. Too much pressure may damage the optic nerve, causing loss of sight over time.

At first, glaucoma damages side vision (peripheral vision). Over time, glaucoma may also damage straight-ahead (central) vision and result in blindness. Sight is lost slowly over many years. Glaucoma usually does not cause pain, so you may not notice it until you have lost a great deal of your vision.

What can I do to prevent blindness from glaucoma?

Visit your eye doctor regularly.

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THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Tell your eye doctor about any eye problems you may have noticed.
2. Tell your eye doctor about any risk factors for glaucoma you may have (see page 3).
3. Be sure to have a complete eye exam, which includes dilation.
4. Tell your doctor what medicines you are taking.



Can I tell if I have glaucoma?

People usually don't notice that they have glaucoma unless they have a great deal of damage to their optic nerve.

Remember, even without any warning signs you may still have glaucoma, so it is important to get a complete eye exam.

How will an eye doctor treat my glaucoma?

An eye doctor will treat most people with eye drops to lower eye pressure. If eye drops don't work, your doctor may recommend laser or glaucoma surgery.

Protect your sight!

Glaucoma treatment is successful if started early. Remember, your eye doctor can check for glaucoma during a complete eye exam. Doctors may also test your side vision and eye pressure, but testing eye pressure alone is not a good way to find glaucoma.

Visit your eye doctor regularly and talk to your eye doctor about any risk factors you have. If you are 55 or older, you should have a complete eye exam every other year.

WE CAN HELP YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT GLAUCOMA.

If you have questions or would like to know more, call the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness at 312-922-8710, or visit us at eyehealthillinois.org

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Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness

The Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness was founded in 1916 to prevent the tragedy of needless blindness. Dedicated to the care, protection and preservation of sight, ISPB programs stress education, information, eye safety and research.

For more information on ISPB, or to make a contribution, call 1.312.922.8710 or visit us on the Web at www.eyehellinois.org.

FOUNDING MEMBER: COMMUNITY HEALTH CHARITIES OF ILLINOIS



This brochure was created for the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness by Prevent Blindness America.

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research.

For more information on Prevent Blindness America, call 1.800.331.2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.