

Glaucoma can take your sight away.



Keep Vision in Your Future.

Glaucoma on the Rise With a 58 Percent Increase by 2030

It's the first month of the new year, a time when more than 40 percent of American adults make one or more resolutions. What are your resolutions for the new year? Losing weight? Quitting smoking? How about learning more about glaucoma and how you can protect your sight?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the optic nerve of the eye and lead to vision loss and blindness. Primary open-angle glaucoma is the most common form. In this condition, fluid builds up in the front chamber of the eye, and the optic nerve is damaged by the resulting increase in eye pressure. This potentially blinding eye disease currently affects 2.7 million people nationwide, and studies show that at least half of all people with glaucoma do not know they have it.

“While anyone can develop glaucoma, we encourage people at higher risk to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam every one to two years,” said director Dr. Paul Sieving of the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health. “Individuals at higher risk include African Americans age 40 and over; everyone over the age of 60, especially Mexican Americans; and people with a family history of glaucoma.”

The prevalence of glaucoma is projected to reach 4.2 million by the year 2030 and 6.3 million by 2050. Last year, NEI invested \$71 million on a wide range of studies to understand causes and potential areas of treatment for glaucoma.

“Primary open-angle glaucoma often has no early warning signs,” said Dr. James Tsai, chair of the Glaucoma Subcommittee for the NEI National Eye Health Education Program. “Often, a person will not experience any noticeable vision loss in the early stages of glaucoma. But as the disease progresses, a person may notice his or her side vision decreasing. If the disease is left untreated, the field of vision narrows and blindness may result.”

Glaucoma can be detected in its early stages through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. During this exam, drops are placed in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupils. This allows your eye care professional to examine the optic nerve for signs of glaucoma and other vision problems. An eye pressure test alone is not enough to detect glaucoma. “It's very important

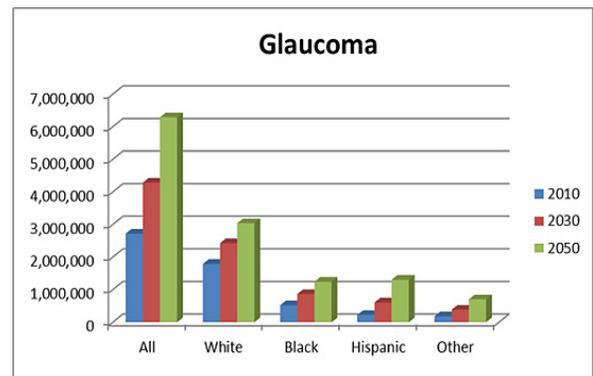


Figure 1: Projections for Glaucoma (2010–2030–2050)
Source: National Eye Institute, 2012

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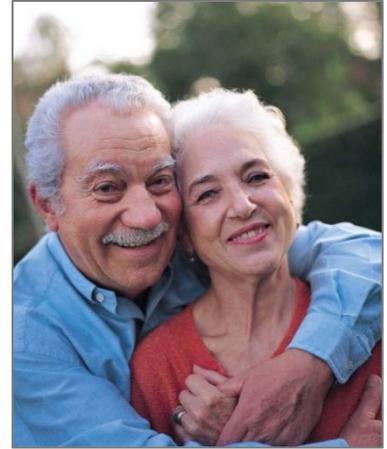
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that people don't wait until they notice a problem with their vision to have an eye exam," adds Dr. Tsai.

If you have Medicare and are African American age 50 or older, are Hispanic/Latino age 65 or older, have diabetes, or have a family history of glaucoma, you may be eligible for a low-cost, comprehensive dilated eye exam through the glaucoma benefit. Call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit <http://www.medicare.gov> for more information. To learn about other possible financial assistance for eye care, visit <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/financialaid.asp>.

"It's a new year," said Dr. Sieving. "Make and keep a resolution to maintain healthy vision. Contact your local eye care professional and make an appointment for a dilated eye exam today."

For more information about glaucoma, visit <http://www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma> or call NEI at 301-496-5248.



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