

# Glaucoma can take your sight away.



## Keep Vision in Your Future.

### Hispanics/Latinos Have Fastest Growing Prevalence of Glaucoma

With a new year come family celebrations that bring us closer to the ones we love, the promise of new beginnings, and opportunities to learn and do new things. January is Glaucoma Awareness Month, the perfect time to do something that can help you or someone you love learn more about glaucoma.

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.

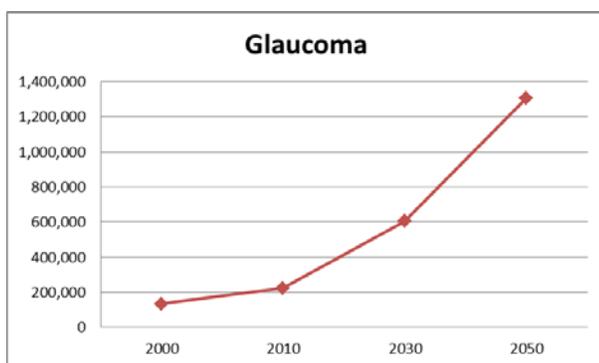


Figure 1: Glaucoma Cases among Hispanics/Latinos: Past and Projected, 2000 to 2050  
Source: National Eye Institute, 2012

There has been a steady rise in glaucoma within the Hispanic/Latino community. In 2010, there were more than 220,000 diagnosed cases of glaucoma in Hispanics/Latinos. By 2030, the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health projects there will be approximately 606,000 cases among Hispanics/Latinos, a 170 percent projected increase, the highest among minority groups. Last year, NEI invested \$71 million on a wide range of studies to understand the causes of and potential treatments for glaucoma.

“Glaucoma currently affects 2.7 million people nationwide and is a leading cause of blindness among Hispanics/Latinos. Glaucoma often has no early warning signs, and most people don’t know this,” 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.”

“Studies show that at least half of all persons with glaucoma don’t know they have this potentially blinding eye disease,” said NEI director Dr. Paul Sieving. “The good news is that glaucoma can be detected early through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Early detection and treatment may save your sight. While anyone can get glaucoma, NEI encourages people at higher risk, including African Americans over the age of 40; everyone over the age of 60, especially Mexican Americans; and people with a family history of the disease, to have a dilated eye exam every one to two years.”

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During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, drops are placed in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupils. This allows your eye care professional to see inside the eye and 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 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, 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>.

This year, do something special for you or someone you love by learning more about glaucoma and protecting your sight. For more information, visit <http://www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma> or call NEI at 301-496-5248.

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