

Are you at risk for glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the name for a group of eye diseases that develop when increased fluid pressure in the eyes damages the nerve fibers in the optic nerve and retina. This damage can lead to irreversible vision loss.

The good news is if glaucoma is detected and treated early, its progression can be slowed or stopped. But the bad news is that people with glaucoma don't always show symptoms. That's why it's important to know if you're at risk.

According to Prevent Blindness America, it's estimated that over 4 million Americans have glaucoma, but only half know they have it. Anyone can get glaucoma, but if you fall into one or more of the risk categories listed below, it's particularly important to receive a comprehensive eye exam that includes dilating your pupils every year:

Advanced age: The older you are, the more likely you are to develop glaucoma.¹

Ethnicity: Glaucoma is 6 to 8 times more prevalent in African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Hispanics than in other ethnic groups.²

Family history: The most common type of glaucoma, primary open-angle glaucoma, is known to be hereditary. Doctors estimate people with a sibling who has glaucoma have almost 10 times the increased risk of developing it themselves.²

High intraocular pressure: Those with abnormally high pressure within the eye are at higher risk for glaucoma.

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Steroid use: According to a study reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, research has shown a connection between long-term steroid use and glaucoma.

Eye injuries: Blunt trauma to the eye can cause traumatic glaucoma, and those who have suffered an eye injury are potentially at risk for developing secondary open-angle glaucoma.²

Diabetes: Having diabetes can increase your risk of glaucoma.²

Even if you don't fall into any of these categories, it's important to have an annual eye exam. And if you do, make sure you notify your doctor of your higher risk for glaucoma in person or by filling out pre-exam paperwork.

1. "Don't Let Glaucoma Steal Your Sight!", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 24, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/features/glaucoma-awareness.html>.

2. "Glaucoma", Mayo Clinic, October 23, 2020, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/glaucoma/symptoms-causes/syc-20372839>.