**News Release**

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**Glaucoma Does Discriminate: Here’s What You Need to Know to Protect Yourself**

*[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] and the American Academy of Ophthalmology urge people at risk to be screened for this potentially blinding eye disease*

**#YearOfTheEye**

**[INSERT CITY, STATE]** — **[INSERT DATE]** – [Glaucoma](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma) is one of the leading causes of vision loss, affecting about 3 million people in the United States.1 But this potentially blinding eye disease does not affect all people equally. If that’s news to you, you’re not alone. According to a recent [Harris Poll survey](https://www.aao.org/newsroom/news-releases/detail/survey-reveals-most-americans-know-less-eye-health), most Americans are unaware that vision loss and blindness discriminate. During Glaucoma Awareness Month in January, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] joins the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma) is urging people to be screened, especially if you are at increased risk of glaucoma.

Who is at risk?

* African Americans are 6 to 8 times more likely to get glaucoma than white Americans. Blindness from glaucoma is 6 to 8 times more common in African Americans than white Americans.2
* People with diabetes are 2 times more likely to get glaucoma than people without diabetes.2
* Hispanic Americans face an increased risk comparable to African Americans, but the disease may also progress faster as they age, compared with other ethnic groups.3
* Asians are at an increased risk for the less common types of glaucoma: angle-closure glaucoma and normal-tension glaucoma.2
* Also at risk are people over age 40, those who are severely [nearsighted](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/myopia-nearsightedness), and those who have a family history of glaucoma.

[Glaucoma](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma) is a group of diseases that damages the eye’s optic nerve. The optic nerve transmits visual information to the brain, allowing us to see. Because glaucoma often progresses slowly, affecting just peripheral or side vision, people with glaucoma can lose most of their vision before they even experience any [symptoms](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/glaucoma-symptoms). Central vision, the vision used to read, drive or watch TV, is unaffected until the disease is advanced. [Read here how one woman lost 90 percent of her vision before learning she had glaucoma](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/patient-stories-detail/peggy-glaucoma).

**“Just because you think you can see well, doesn’t mean all is well,” said Dianna Seldomridge, M.D., clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “**Once vision is lost to glaucoma, it can’t be regained. That’s why regular screening, especially among those at higher risk for glaucoma, is absolutely vital. When caught early, glaucoma can be treated with eyedrops or an in-office laser treatment. But in advanced cases, surgery may be required to slow the vision loss and prevent further damage.”

[INSERT YOUR SPOKESPERSON’S QUOTE HERE]

For more information about eye health and how to protect your eyes, visit the Academy’s EyeSmart [website](https://www.aao.org/eye-health).

**Some Seniors May Be Eligible for Glaucoma Screening**

For individuals age 65 or older who are concerned about their risk of eye disease, you may be eligible for a medical eye exam, often at no out-of-pocket cost, through the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s EyeCare America®program. For those at increased risk for glaucoma, they may qualify for a glaucoma exam through EyeCare America. This public service program matches volunteer ophthalmologists with eligible patients in need of eye care across the United States. To see if you or a loved one qualifies, visit [EyeCare America](https://www.aao.org/eyecare-america) to determine your eligibility.

Medicare provides an annual dilated eye exam for Medicare beneficiaries over age 65 at high risk for glaucoma.Those eligible for this service are people with diabetes, family history of glaucoma or African Americans over 50. To learn more, call 800-633-4227.

**About the American Academy of Ophthalmology**The Academy is the world’s largest association of eye physicians and surgeons. A global community of 32,000 medical doctors, it protects sight and empowers lives by setting the standards for ophthalmic education and advocating for its patients and the public. The Academy innovates to advance the profession and to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality eye care. Through its EyeSmart® articles on AAO.org, the Academy provides the public with the most trusted information about eye health. For more information, visit [aao.org](http://www.aao.org/).

The Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Cost of Vision Problems. Prevent Blindness. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from <https://www.preventblindness.org/sites/default/files/national/documents/Future_of_Vision_final_0.pdf>

2Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/glaucoma-awareness/index.html>

3Quigley HA, West SK, et al. The prevalence of glaucoma in a population-based study of Hispanic subjects. Arch