



# Eye on Health

## Don't Be Blinded By The Light

(NAPSA)—Imagine being “blind with light.” That’s how some people with an eye disease called keratoconus describe their vision.



The disease has no known cure and some who have it don't know it because it often begins as a common vision disorder, such as nearsightedness and astigmatism.

Keratoconus causes the cornea to progressively thin and distort while changing shape, resulting in blurry vision. It can severely affect the way we see the world, including simple tasks such as driving, watching TV, or just reading a book.

The cornea is normally a round or spherical shape, but with keratoconus, it bulges, distorts into more of a cone shape. This affects the way light enters the eye and hits the light-sensitive retina.

While the cause is unknown, scientists believe genetics, excessive laser eye surgery, and atopic dis-

eases such as hay fever, eczema and asthma may be factors.

According to Dr. Arthur Epstein, director of the Contact Lens Service of North Shore University Hospital, NYU School of Medicine and chairman of Optometry for the Center for Keratoconus, “If left untreated, the disease can severely affect the way keratoconus patients see the world.”

The key, he adds, is to catch the disease early. The onset is usually during adolescence, but can happen in children as young as six. It may progress rapidly or take years to develop. The vision loss can usually be corrected by glasses at first, but eventually gas permeable contact lenses and, in some cases, corneal transplants are necessary.

For more information, see your eye doctor. To get answers to frequently asked questions, learn about the latest research and share your experiences with other people with keratoconus, you can also visit the Center for Keratoconus on the Internet at [www.KCenter.org](http://www.KCenter.org).