

# Vision of Health



## Eye Diseases “Sneak Up” On The Unsuspecting

by Dr. Yvonne M. Johnson

(NAPSA)—Most of the time, our bodies tell us when we are sick. If we have a cold or the flu, we run a fever and suffer from hot flushes and cold chills. Our skin feels clammy.

A sore throat? It hurts to swallow. Allergies? Our eyes are red and itchy. We may sneeze a lot.

However, two very serious eye diseases do not necessarily manifest themselves by any signs or symptoms: age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and glaucoma. They sneak up on us, gradually stealing our vision away until it is too late to salvage it. And both these diseases affect older people, who might not be aware they are at risk.

AMD, the number one cause of blindness in people over the age of 50, is a disease of the retina. Because it usually starts in one eye, the other eye compensates for the loss of vision. You can have vision loss and not even realize it. The part of vision that is lost is called our central vision. It is the vision responsible for our everyday needs like driving a car, recognizing faces, reading, and watching television.

There are two forms of AMD, the wet form and the dry form. The wet form is the most devastating because loss of vision can occur very rapidly, even within months.

Glaucoma is another sneaky disease in which loss of vision can go unnoticed. Glaucoma is caused by increased pressure in the eye, which eventually can



cause blindness if it is not treated. Unlike AMD, the part of vision that is first affected is our peripheral vision or side vision. According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is six to eight times more common in African-Americans than in Caucasians.

Both AMD and glaucoma must be managed in order to preserve as much vision as possible. That is why it is imperative to have regular checkups from your eye care practitioner.

*Dr. Yvonne M. Johnson, an optometrist, is director of Medical Affairs at Novartis Ophthalmics North America. Her column is part of the company's public health education initiatives. To have a vision question answered by Dr. Johnson contact her by e-mail at [DoctorYJohnson@hotmail.com](mailto:DoctorYJohnson@hotmail.com), go to [www.novartisophthalmics.com](http://www.novartisophthalmics.com) or write to Dr. Johnson at Novartis Ophthalmics, 11695 Johns Creek Parkway, Duluth, GA 30097.*