



Eye on Health

Poor Eye Drainage Can Lead To Glaucoma

(NAPSA)—Every winter across the U.S., heavy rains bring thoughts of flooding, backed-up drainage systems and overflowing streets. When the drains and city sewers get clogged, the overflow of winter rains can bring a once-bustling community to a grinding halt. Like the backup caused by winter's inevitable downpours, poor drainage of a person's eye can lead to high eye pressure, which is a cause of glaucoma. The vision loss can be devastating and can drastically change the life of a once-active adult. In fact, 2.2 million Americans have glaucoma, but half do not realize it because there are often no warning signs.

In a healthy eye, fluid is constantly being made and drained through a tiny drainage canal. When something blocks or prevents this natural drainage, the pressure inside the eye goes up. Glaucoma is often caused by increased pressure that can develop when the fluids in the eye are not draining properly. This condition eventually damages the nerve that connects the eye to the brain and leads to loss of vision.

EyeCare America, the public service foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, encourages those without insurance to take advantage of its national Glaucoma EyeCare Program. The program offers glaucoma eye exams for those at increased risk of glaucoma. To see if you, a loved one or a friend is eligible to receive a referral for an eye exam, call (800) 391-EYES (3937), 24 hours a day, every day, year-round. All eligible callers receive a referral to one of EyeCare America's 7,000 volunteer ophthalmologists.

The Glaucoma EyeCare Program is designed for people who:

- Are U.S. citizens or legal residents
- Have not had an eye exam in 12 months or more



Glaucoma can mean you're only seeing a small part of the picture.

- Are deemed to be at increased risk for glaucoma (as determined by family history, race, age).

What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

While occasionally the condition may come on suddenly, most cases progress so slowly there are often no warning signs before damage inside the eye has already occurred. In most cases, a person's side vision (peripheral vision) is noticeably affected.

Who is at risk?

While the causes of glaucoma are not completely known, we do know that risk factors for its development include family history, race and older age. African Americans and Hispanics are also at higher risk for getting the disease.

How is glaucoma treated?

- Eyedrops that lower eye pressure
- Laser therapy that allows for better drainage of fluids inside the eye
- Eye surgery to create a new drainage canal.

If not treated, glaucoma can and does lead to total blindness. Glaucoma is easily detected with a medical eye examination. Ophthalmologists can measure the pressure inside the eye with a quick and painless office test. Glaucoma doesn't have to interfere with leading a happy, sighted and fulfilling life. Detecting the disease early can save your sight. More information can be found at www.eyecareamerica.org.