



Eye on Health

World Glaucoma Day Raises Awareness Of Glaucoma: A Silent But Preventable Sight Thief

(NAPSA)—You may not know it, but right now, an eye disease called glaucoma could begin to steal your sight. Could you or someone you love be at risk? Many people don't realize it, but in its early stages, glaucoma may have few or even no symptoms. And if not treated, glaucoma can lead to blindness—a condition that ranks third (after cancer and heart disease) as the top health fear for Americans. To help people better understand glaucoma and treatment options available, the World Glaucoma Association and the World Glaucoma Patient Association launched World Glaucoma Day.

“Glaucoma is the second-leading cause of blindness worldwide, which underscores the importance of a global program such as World Glaucoma Day,” said Dr. Robert N. Weinreb, M.D., Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of the Hamilton Glaucoma Center at the University of California, San Diego, and President of the American Glaucoma Society.

As part of World Glaucoma Day, eye care professionals are raising awareness of this disease, with a focus on educating people on what they can do to prevent glaucoma from taking their sight. Here is what you should know about glaucoma:

- While anyone can develop glaucoma, some people are at a higher risk, including people with a family history of glaucoma, diabetes and everyone older than age 60.

Did You Know?

Although approximately 4 million Americans have glaucoma, only half of those affected know they have it. Left untreated, glaucoma can lead to blindness. While anyone can develop glaucoma, some people are at a higher risk, including:

- People with a family history of glaucoma
- People with high intraocular pressure, or pressure inside the eye
- Everyone over age 60
- African Americans
- Hispanics over the age of 60
- People with diabetes
- People who have used steroids for a long period of time
- People with physical eye injuries



- Glaucoma often has no symptoms but if you notice changes in your peripheral or side vision you should see an eye doctor.

- While glaucoma cannot be cured, further vision loss can be prevented by lowering the elevated intraocular pressure or fluid pressure in the eye through prescription eye drops.

- It is important to schedule regular examinations with an eye doctor in order to detect glaucoma early.

In recognition of the second annual World Glaucoma Day on March 12, 2009, schedule an appointment with your eye care professional. For more information about glaucoma and what you can do to preserve your vision, please visit <http://www.glaucoma.org>.