

# Eye on Health

## Look To The Future: Save Yourself From Glaucoma

(NAPSA)—There could be eye-opening news for many of the more than 4 million people in the United States who have glaucoma, a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve and destroy eyesight: The condition can be detected and treated.

Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Eye Institute (NEI), one of the National Institutes of Health, said, “NEI-funded research has shown that treatment during the early stages of glaucoma can control the disease and prevent future vision loss and blindness. This is why the NEI encourages people at higher risk for glaucoma to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam every one to two years.”

Unfortunately, nearly half of those with glaucoma are not even aware that they have it. With its painless and gradual loss of vision, glaucoma may have no early warning signs. Fortunately, it can be detected during a comprehensive dilated eye exam; that is, one that includes having drops put in your eye.

Anyone can develop glaucoma, but those at higher risk for developing the disease include:

- African-Americans over age 40;
- Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans;
- People with a family history of the disease.

During the comprehensive dilated eye exam, an eye care professional can see inside the eye to detect signs of glaucoma, such as



**Seeing your way clear to getting regular, comprehensive dilated eye exams can help you avoid blindness due to glaucoma.**

subtle changes to the optic nerve, before any symptoms appear. This lets the eye doctor determine if you have glaucoma or are at risk for it; monitor your condition; treat any glaucoma as early as possible; and look for other vision problems. Once symptoms appear, it may be too late to prevent vision loss and the progression to blindness.

If glaucoma is detected early, treatments such as eyedrops or surgery can slow or stop vision loss. High pressure inside the eye, which may be associated with glaucoma, does not by itself mean that you have the condition.

If you know people at risk for glaucoma, you can let them know you care by sending them glaucoma e-cards. At the Web site [www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma](http://www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma), you can personalize a number of different cards warning about glaucoma and e-mail them to anyone you want.

For more information, visit [www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma](http://www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma).