

News of Health

Opening Your Eyes To A Common Vision Problem

(NAPSA)—A National Eye Institute study revealed the treatment of a condition called ocular hypertension (OH) reduces the later development of glaucoma by half. However, a new survey found Americans know very little about OH.

Anywhere from three to six million people in the U.S. are thought to be suffering from OH—a symptomless condition in which the pressure of the fluid inside the eye reaches above normal levels. That can put a person at greater risk of developing glaucoma—one of the leading causes of vision loss in the U.S.

A study conducted by an independent research organization on behalf of Santen Inc.—manufacturers of a common OH medication known as Betimol® (timolol ophthalmic solution) 0.25%, 0.5%—found only 27 percent of Americans have heard of OH and only seven percent of those who know about OH are aware that it has no symptoms. In addition, only 29 percent of the group at increased risk of developing OH—those aged 40 and over—are aware of the condition and only 19 percent know they should be routinely checked for it.

“Since ocular hypertension is usually not associated with symptoms, most individuals with the condition are unaware they have a problem,” says Dr. Kuldev Singh, Director of Glaucoma Services at Stanford University School of Medicine. “That’s why individuals aged 40 and older should see their eye doctors for annual exams to determine if OH is present and whether treatment is needed to decrease the risk of developing glaucoma.”

The National Eye Institute study examined patients with elevated eye pressure but no signs of glaucoma. Half were assigned daily eyedrops, and the



People over age 40 should be regularly screened for ocular hypertension—a condition that’s often a precursor to glaucoma.

other half were assigned to observation (no medication). In the medication group, treatment reduced eye pressure by approximately 20 percent.

A variety of treatment approaches for OH, including a category known as beta-blockers, were used in the NEI study. A class of medicines frequently used for lowering blood pressure in heart patients, beta-blockers in eyedrop form like Betimol have been the most commonly used medicines for treatment of OH for 20 years. They work by decreasing the rate of ocular fluid production, thereby lowering intraocular pressure.

As with any pharmaceutical product, Betimol cannot be used by all patients, especially those with certain lung diseases and heart problems, and can cause certain side effects including temporary burning and stinging of the eye. Be sure to discuss the proper use of Betimol as well as its potential side effects with your physician before using this product.

For more information on the treatment of OH consult your healthcare provider or Santen at 1-877-7-SANTEN.