

# health awareness



CTSI

A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

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# SAVE YOUR EYES



## GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

## GLAUCOMA

**G**laucoma is the name given to an assortment of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve, which is crucial for good vision. The optic nerve transfers visual information in the form of electrical impulses from the retina to the brain.

There are no symptoms of glaucoma, and according to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, a person can lose more than 40% of his or her vision without noticing. More than three million people in the United States have glaucoma, a number that is expected to increase by 58% by 2030. Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness for people over 60.

### Causes

Most forms of glaucoma are caused by increased pressure in the eye. Aqueous humor, the fluid that flows through the eye, drains via a web of tissue where the iris and cornea meet, called the trabecular meshwork. When this tissue becomes blocked, aqueous humor builds up in the eye and begins damaging the optic nerve.

Glaucoma signs and symptoms may not be evident until the disease has advanced enough to cause significant vision loss, so it is important to be aware of the risk factors.

According to the Mayo Clinic,

risk factors include the following:

- Having high internal eye pressure (intraocular pressure)
- Being over age 60
- Being black, Asian, or Hispanic
- Having a family history of glaucoma
- Having certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and sickle cell anemia
- Having corneas that are thin in the center
- Being extremely nearsighted or farsighted
- Having had an eye injury or certain types of eye surgery

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- Taking corticosteroid medications, especially eyedrops, for a long time

### Prevention

Early diagnosis is the best defense against permanent vision loss due to glaucoma. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends regular comprehensive eye exams with dilation to detect early vision loss and measure intraocular pressure. Individuals under 40 should have an exam every five to 10 years. After 40, the recommendation is for a comprehensive exam every two to four years. After 55, exams should occur every one to three years and every one to two years af-

ter 65. People at increased risk for glaucoma should follow an exam schedule recommended by their doctor.

While early diagnosis is the best way to prevent vision loss from glaucoma, there are other ways to slow its progress. Regular exercise can help reduce eye pressure. Also, eye injuries increase glaucoma risk, so take steps to prevent them by wearing eye protection when working with tools or playing sports like racketball.

### Treatments

Damage caused by glaucoma cannot be reversed, but treatment to relieve intraocular

pressure can prevent or slow vision loss. Depending on the type of glaucoma and the amount of pressure in the eye, treatment options may include eye drops, oral medications, laser treatments, surgery, or a combination of these. Even with treatment, about 15% of people with glaucoma will go partially blind within 20 years.



## Benefits Corner

### COVID-19 Benefits

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) passed last March, insurance cost-sharing is waived for COVID-19 vaccinations and testing; therefore, CHP will cover COVID-19 vaccinations and testing costs at 100% under the terms of the CARES Act. This benefit extends to both in-network and out of network providers. The cost shares for COVID-19 testing, COVID-19 vaccinations, and Telehealth visits will continue to be waived under CHP through March 31, 2021, and at that time will be re-evaluated. Other COVID-19 treatments are covered under regular plan parameters. Should coverage under the CARES Act end, CHP will conduct a benefit and cost analysis to determine ongoing COVID-19 related coverage.



If you or your county has questions regarding the reimbursement for any of the above as a county or for your individual employees, please reach out the CHP staff. As always, CTSI staff is here to assist you with your health, dental, vision, or life insurance coverage. You can reach us at 303 861 0507.