



*Yelm Family
Medicine
Patient
Newsletter*

Committed to your health and our community
National Glaucoma Awareness Month

IN THIS ISSUE

National Glaucoma Awareness Month provides a perfect opportunity to learn more about glaucoma, a leading cause of vision loss that affects more than 3 million people in the United States. [Glaucoma](#) often is called "the sneak thief of sight" for good reason: Many people are unaware that glaucoma has few symptoms or warning signs in its early stages. Early treatment for glaucoma can usually (but not always) slow the progression of the disease. **However, as of yet, there is no cure for glaucoma.** Because glaucoma has no obvious initial symptoms, a [comprehensive dilated eye exam](#) is critical to detect early glaucoma changes. People who are over 40 should have a dilated eye examination

from an ophthalmologist or optometrist at least every two years. African Americans; people who are over 35 and have a family history of glaucoma; and everyone age 60 or older should schedule a comprehensive eye examination every year.

What Is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that can lead to blindness by damaging the optic nerve, which transmits information from the eye to the brain, where it is processed and interpreted. The eye continuously produces a fluid, called the aqueous, that must drain from the eye to maintain healthy eye pressure. Glaucoma is particularly dangerous to your vision because there are usually no

We will be closed Monday January 1st and reopen Tuesday January 2nd.



noticeable initial symptoms or early warning signs.

The Different Types of Glaucoma

Primary Open Angle Glaucoma

The most common type of glaucoma is Primary Open Angle Glaucoma (POAG). In POAG, the eye's drainage canals become blocked, and the fluid accumulation causes pressure to build within the eye. This pressure can cause damage to the optic nerve, which transmits information from the eye to the brain.

Vision loss with this type of glaucoma is usually gradual, and often there are no early warning signs. There is a strong genetic predisposition for this type of glaucoma.

Angle Closure Glaucoma

Angle Closure Glaucoma is much less common than POAG in the United States. In this type of glaucoma, the [aqueous](#) cannot drain properly because the entrance to the drainage canal is either too narrow or is closed completely. In this case, eye pressure can rise very quickly and can be triggered by [pupil dilation](#).

Symptoms can include sudden eye pain, nausea, headaches, and blurred vision. **If you experience these symptoms**, you should seek immediate medical treatment.

Normal Tension Glaucoma

In this type of glaucoma, also called low-pressure glaucoma, there is damage to the optic nerve, even though the eye pressure is not elevated excessively. A family history of any type of glaucoma, cardiovascular disease, and Japanese ancestry are a few of the risk factors for this type of glaucoma.

This type of glaucoma is treated much like POAG, but the eye pressure needs to be kept even lower to prevent progression of vision loss.

Secondary Glaucoma's

Secondary glaucoma's are those that develop as secondary to, or as complications of, other conditions, including eye trauma, [cataracts](#), [diabetes](#), eye surgery, or tumors.

How Is Glaucoma Detected?

Because glaucoma can begin to develop without noticeable symptoms, the best way to protect your sight is to schedule regular

comprehensive dilated eye examinations, which should include all of the following components:

- A health and medication history
- A vision history
- Visual acuity testing
- Basic visual field testing

You can read more about each of these eye examination components at [What Is a Comprehensive Dilated Eye Examination?](#)



Development of Glaucoma

