

# January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

## Protect Your Sight!

*Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in the United States. See your optometrist for a comprehensive dilated eye exam to protect your vision and eye health.*

### The Facts

- Glaucoma affects over an estimated 4 million Americans
- Half of those affected may be unaware they have the disease
- Glaucoma develops slowly, with no initial symptoms
- Glaucoma cannot currently be cured, but it can be managed
- Glaucoma is found most often during a dilated eye exam

### Definition of Glaucoma and Cause

- *Glaucoma*: Disease causing gradual degeneration of cells that make up the optic nerve
- The optic nerve carries visual information from the eye to the brain
- As the nerve cells die, vision is slowly lost; this is often unnoticeable until a significant amount of nerve damage has occurred
- Caused by fluid buildup in the eye's anterior chamber, which results in increased pressure in the eye
- Unless this pressure is controlled, it may cause loss of vision

### Patients at Greatest Risk

- Adults over 60 years of age
- African Americans over age 40
- Anyone with a family history of glaucoma

### Managing Glaucoma

- Medication – Either in the form of eye drops or oral medication designed to reduce pressure in the eye
- Laser Surgery – Makes it easier for fluid to leave the eye; patients may need to keep using glaucoma drops even with this procedure
- Surgery – Can also help fluid escape from the eye, reducing pressure. Usually reserved for patients whose pressure cannot be controlled with eye drops, oral medication, or laser surgery

### What Can I Do to Protect My Vision and Eye Health?

- Early detection and treatment of glaucoma, before it causes major vision loss, is the best way to control the disease
- **Make sure to have a comprehensive dilated eye examination by a licensed eye care professional at least every 1-2 years. Patients over age 60 should receive this exam annually**