

National Glaucoma Awareness Month
Key Messages
January 2012

- I. According to the South Carolina Optometric Physicians Association (SCOPA) and the American Optometric Association (AOA) early detection and treatment of glaucoma is critical to maintaining healthy vision and protecting the eyes from the potentially blinding disease.**
- Studies show that over the next ten years the number of Americans diagnosed with glaucoma will increase by more than one million.
 - Glaucoma is often referred to as the “sneak thief of sight” because it is painless and causes gradual vision loss. Since it begins by attacking peripheral vision, patients may experience permanent visual loss before they realize there is a problem.
 - Fifty percent of Americans incorrectly believe glaucoma is preventable. In reality, the disease cannot be prevented, but is treatable only when caught in the early stages. (Source: AOA’s American Eye-Q® survey)
- II. Anyone can be at risk for developing glaucoma; however, specific factors such as age, race and genetics can increase one’s risk.**
- The American Eye-Q® survey found that only 16 percent of those surveyed knew that race or ethnicity may increase their risk.
 - According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, African Americans ages 45 to 65 are 14 to 17 times more likely to go blind from glaucoma than Caucasians.
- III. Since vision loss suffered from glaucoma cannot be restored, the AOA recommends regular comprehensive eye exams for all individuals, and especially those with a heightened risk.**
- A comprehensive eye exam by a doctor of optometry can not only evaluate the functional status of the eyes and visual system, it may also detect certain chronic and systemic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and, of course, glaucoma.
 - The SCOPA recommends eye exams yearly for all adults.. Eye doctors may recommend more frequent checkups based on a patient’s overall health, risk factors or family history.
 - In addition to regular, comprehensive eye exams, the SCOPA also recommends incorporating a few easy tips into your life to help save your sight:
 - Watch that diet: Eat green, leafy vegetables and foods rich in nutrients like beta carotene, vitamin C and zinc to protect eyes from disease.
 - Cut down on those bad habits: Cigarettes and alcohol or caffeine can all be harmful to the eyes.
 - If you work in front of a computer, practice the 20/20 rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break to help avoid eye strain and computer vision syndrome.
 - Wear those shades: Both adults and children should wear sunglasses year-round with UV-A and UV-B protection.
 - Follow your doctor’s orders: Keep in mind your eye care professional’s recommendations in terms of regular eye exams, corrective lens instructions and hygiene.
 - To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information on eye health, specifically glaucoma, please visit www.sceyedoctors.com or www.aoa.org.