

Glaucoma 17-Point Checklist



If you know you have glaucoma:

1. Seek encouragement from family, friends and other sources, such as glaucoma patient support groups.
2. You'll be visiting your eye doctor regularly, so choose one with whom you are comfortable.
3. Write down your questions and notes so that you can make the most of your eye doctor appointments.
4. Tell your eye doctor, family and friends how medications are affecting you.
5. Tell all of your doctors about your eye medications and other drugs you're taking.
6. Read materials from accurate sources to help you understand and live with glaucoma.
7. Ask your doctor to write down your medication schedule. Ask whether "four times a day" means "every six hours" or while you're awake.
8. Always use the proper procedure for applying glaucoma medication in eye drop form.

Know the following risk factors and ask yourself these questions:

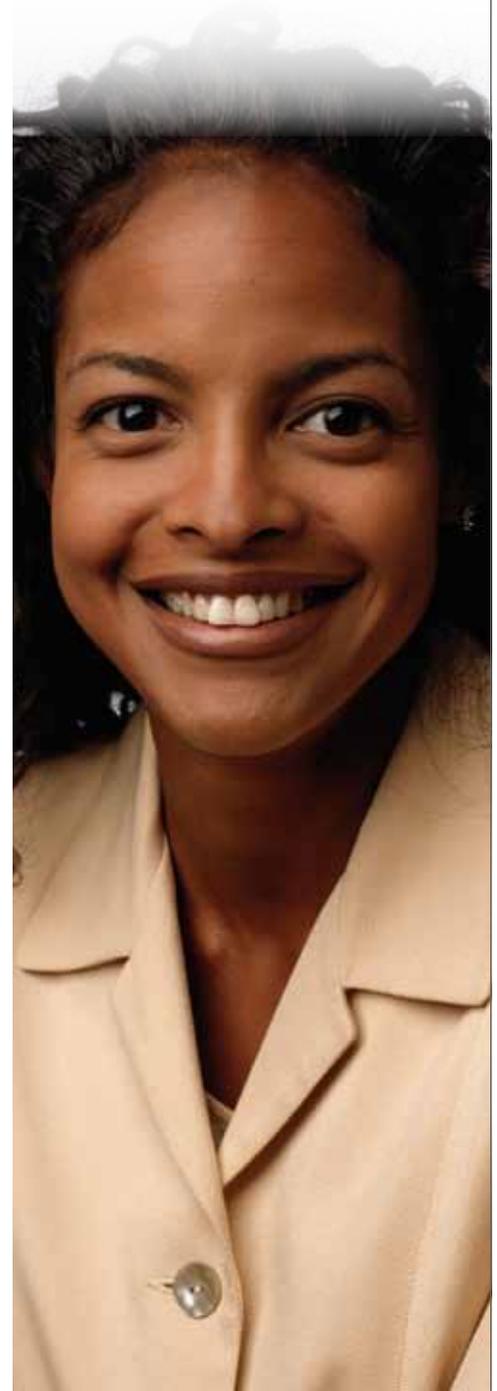
(9–15 puts you at higher risk for glaucoma)

9. Did my parents, grandparents or great-grandparents lose their sight? What was the cause of their vision loss? Glaucoma occurs at least twice as frequently among people who have blood relatives with glaucoma.
10. Do I have diabetes?
11. Am I of African-American or of Afro-Caribbean descent? (if so, you are more likely to get glaucoma at a younger age.)
12. Am I 40 years of age or older?
13. Have I had an eye injury or eye surgery, even as a child?
14. Am I very nearsighted?
15. Have I taken steroids on a long-term basis?
16. Do I qualify for the annual glaucoma screening benefit under Medicare?
17. Most importantly: Have I had an eye exam recently?

Visit your eye doctor regularly

If you are 55 or older, you should get an eye exam at least once every two years. If you have diabetes or other health problems, you may need to see an eye doctor more often.

During a dilated eye exam, the eye doctor widens the pupil of the eye with eye drops to allow a closer look at the inside of the eye. The exam is not painful, and it may not always be part of an eye exam for a new pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses. A dilated eye exam will allow your eye doctor to check for glaucoma and other eye diseases.



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Facts & Myths About Cataract



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MYTH: Only older Americans develop cataract

FACT: While cataract affects more than 24 million Americans age 40 and older, cataract can occur among young adults or children. Risk factors that may lead to getting cataract at a younger age include:

- Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Inflammation in the eye
- Hereditary influences
- Events before birth, such as German measles in the mother
- Long-term steroid use
- Severe long-term nearsightedness (myopia)
- Eye injuries
- Eye diseases
- Smoking

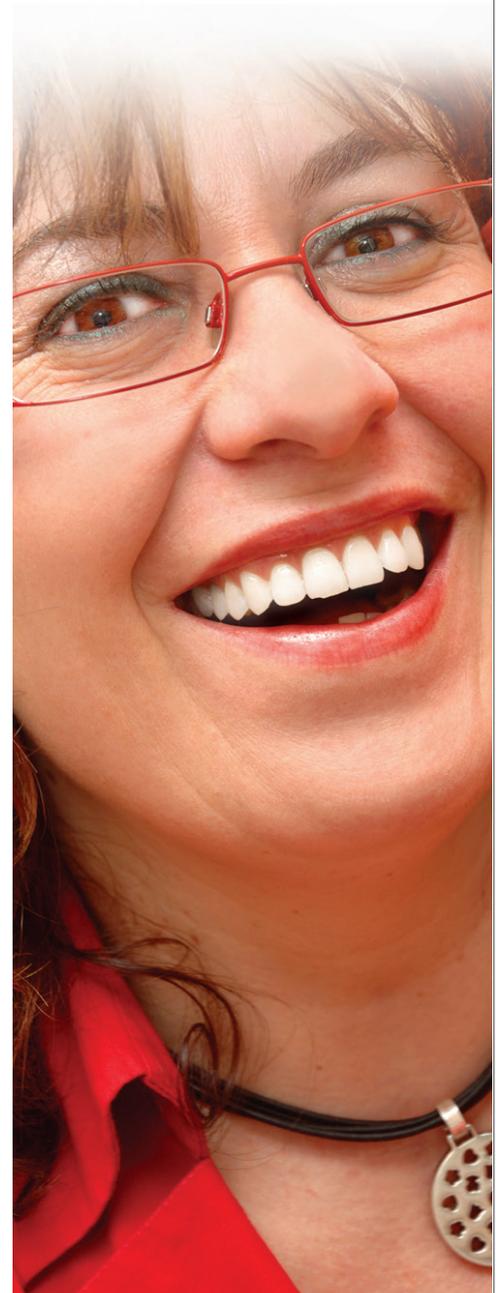
MYTH: Taking Vitamin E or Vitamin C can prevent cataract

FACT: Some research centers are studying the link between these vitamins and cataract prevention. However, it will be many years before the studies can determine if vitamin C or E actually reduces a person's risk of cataract. Until then, it's best not to take these vitamins in large doses unless they have been prescribed by your physician.

MYTH: The best time to have cataract surgery done is when it is first diagnosed.

FACT: Cataract removal is elective surgery, which means it is the patient's choice when to undergo the procedure. Most people need surgery when the cataract causes enough vision loss to interfere with work, play or other day-to-day tasks. You, your eye doctor, and family members should decide together when and if surgery is needed.

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Facts & Myths About Cataract—Continued

MYTH: Taking aspirin can prevent cataract

FACT: There are not enough facts or evidence to say whether aspirin prevents cataract. Aspirin in large doses can be harmful. Unless your doctor prescribes aspirin for an ailment, it's best to avoid taking this medication on a regular basis.

MYTH: Lasers are used to remove cataract

FACT: In cataract treatment, the clouded lens is surgically removed and then replaced with an artificial lens implant. If a patient has cataract in both eyes, separate surgeries are scheduled. Sometimes the membrane behind the implant may become cloudy after cataract surgery. Laser treatment then may be used to open up the cloudy membrane.

MYTH: Cataract can be treated with eye drops

FACT: Surgery is the only proven treatment for cataract. Cataract cannot be treated with medicines.

MYTH: Cataract surgery is dangerous

FACT: Cataract surgery is a delicate operation. Yet, it is one of the safest operations done today. More than 95% of surgeries are successful. Fewer than 5% of cases have complications such as inflammation, bleeding, infection and retinal detachment.

MYTH: It can take months to recover from cataract surgery

FACT: In many cases, patients often can see well enough to resume normal activities a few days after having cataract surgery. Your vision will continue to improve over the following weeks and months. However, if you have additional eye problems, such as glaucoma, your recovery time might take longer.

