

## FACTS ABOUT GLAUCOMA

### *Did you know:*

Doctors of optometry examine the internal and external structure of the eyes to detect and diagnose eye diseases like glaucoma. Glaucoma affects an estimated 3 million Americans, and can cause its victims to lose their vision—sometimes without warning. It is estimated that half of the people with glaucoma do not even know they have it.

Glaucoma causes gradual damage to the optic nerve that carries visual information from the eye to the brain. Loss of vision is not experienced until a significant amount of nerve damage has already occurred. Most cases of glaucoma can be controlled, and vision loss slowed or halted, by timely diagnosis and treatment. Vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored.

Like many diseases, some factors can increase the risk of developing glaucoma, including age, race and genetics. Glaucoma usually affects one in 200 people by age 50 and as many as one in ten people by age 80.

The risk of developing glaucoma is four to five times higher among African Americans than among other races. In fact, glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness in African Americans. Not only do African Americans develop glaucoma on average ten years earlier than Caucasians, they are also six to 15 times more likely to be blinded by the disease.

Glaucoma cannot be prevented, but if diagnosed and treated early, it can be controlled. The American Optometric Association recommends that all adults see their eye doctor for regular, comprehensive eye exams that can identify the early signs of glaucoma.