

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Number of Glaucoma Cases Projected to Increase Significantly Due To Aging U.S. Population, Prevent Blindness Offers Free Educational Resources**

**CHICAGO (Dec. 19, 2016)** – Glaucoma, commonly referred to as the “sneak thief of sight,” currently affects nearly 3 million people ages 40 and older, according to the [Prevent Blindness](#) report, “[Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems.](#)” By the year 2032, the number is projected to increase nearly 50 percent to 4.3 million and by more than 90 percent to 5.5 million by 2050, due significantly to the large aging population in the United States.

Glaucoma is an eye disease that can lead to vision loss if not controlled. Treatment cannot reverse damage that has already occurred, but it can prevent further vision loss. Glaucoma damages the optic nerve, causing the loss of patches of vision, usually side vision (peripheral vision).

According to the recent National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division (NASEM) consensus study, “[Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow.](#)” in relation to glaucoma, physiological changes related to the aging process alter the physical conditions under which light enters the eye or compromise the cellular function or neural pathways that relay information about the physical environment to the eye or the brain. Additionally, the report states that in the early and intermediate stages of glaucoma, changes in vision may not be noticeable without a dilated eye examination, despite ongoing damage to structures of the visual system.

January has been declared as National Glaucoma Awareness Month by Prevent Blindness and other leading eye health organizations, in an effort to help educate the public on the disease, including risk factors and treatment options. Prevent Blindness offers a dedicated web page providing patients and their caregivers with additional free information at <http://www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma>

There are several types of glaucoma including:

- **Chronic (Open Angle) Glaucoma-** This is the most common type. In open angle glaucoma, aqueous fluid drains too slowly and pressure inside the eye builds up. It usually results from aging of the drainage channel, which doesn't work as well over time. However, younger people can also get this type of glaucoma.
- **Normal Tension Glaucoma-** This is a form of open angle glaucoma not related to high pressure. People with normal tension glaucoma may be unusually sensitive to normal levels of pressure. Reduced blood supply to the optic nerve may also play a role in normal tension glaucoma.
- **Acute (Angle Closure) Glaucoma-** Those of Asian and Native American descent are at higher risk for this form of glaucoma. It occurs when the drainage system of the eye becomes blocked. It causes a sudden rise in pressure, requiring immediate, emergency medical care. The signs are usually serious and may include blurred vision, severe headaches, eye pain, nausea, vomiting or seeing rainbow-like halos around lights. Occasionally, the condition may be without symptoms; similar to open angle.
- **Secondary glaucoma-** This is the result of another eye condition or disease, such as inflammation, trauma, or tumor. Uveitis is an inflammation that can cause secondary glaucoma.

“Fortunately, the damaging effects of glaucoma can be lessened if detected and treated early,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “We urge everyone, especially those ages 40 and older, to make an appointment for a dilated eye exam from an eyecare professional today. Please don’t put off your chance for healthy vision until tomorrow!”

For more information on glaucoma or financial assistance programs, including [Medicare coverage](#), please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit <http://www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma>. To download a copy of the NASEM report, go to <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2016/making-eye-health-a-population-health-imperative-vision-for-tomorrow.aspx>

### **About Prevent Blindness**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).