Glaucoma: A Serious Eye Disease

Glaucoma is an eye disease that causes vision loss and blindness. It causes damage to the **optic nerve.** The optic nerve is like a wire. It carries the pictures that you see up to your brain. Your brain tells you what those pictures mean. If the optic nerve is hurt, you may lose some of your vision or even become blind.

How do you know if you have glaucoma?
At first, you can't notice any changes in your sight. You still see well and you have no pain. After a while, you have trouble seeing things out of the side of your eyes. If you don't take care of glaucoma, your sight will keep getting worse and you may go blind.

Who is most at risk for developing glaucoma?
- African Americans over age 40
- Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans
- People with a family history of glaucoma
- People who have diabetes

What doctors take care of glaucoma?
- Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who treat many problems with the eyes. They can also do surgery.
- Optometrists are health professionals who do eye exams and can screen for eye diseases. In New York State, they can only give certain medicines or do certain surgeries.

What tests do doctors use to see if you have glaucoma?
- A special eye exam called a **dilated eye exam.** During this exam, the doctor can see to the back of your eye. You have to get eye drops for this exam. The eye drops and the exam do not hurt.
- A test that tells the doctor how much pressure there is in the eye. High pressure in your eye means you may develop glaucoma. High pressure in your eye does not mean that you have high blood pressure. They are two different things.
- A test that tells the doctor if you can see out of the sides of your eyes. When you first show signs of glaucoma, you lose the sight out of the sides of your eyes.

What can you do to prevent glaucoma?
The best thing is to have a dilated eye exam **every year.** The doctor can tell if you are getting glaucoma, and other eye diseases, before they hurt your sight. Affinity Health Plan works with Block Vision to give you good eye care. You do not need a referral from your doctor if you go to a Block Vision provider. Remember to tell your primary care physician that you are seeing the doctor. Make sure your PCP gets the results of your eye test.

Do you have a question about your eye benefits?   Call 1-800-879-6901