

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release



January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

(Wahiawa, Hawaii) January 12, 2018 – Glaucoma affects more than 3 million Americans and is a leading cause of irreversible blindness, according to the [BrightFocus Foundation](#). Through direct costs and productivity losses, glaucoma expends almost \$3 billion each year from the U.S. economy. Glaucoma is a group of diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve, which sends images from the eye to the brain. [The American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) designates January Glaucoma Awareness Month to remind those most at risk to get regular checkups from an eye care professional.

“Glaucoma is due to an increase in eye pressure, known as intraocular pressure, caused by either an overproduction of fluid in the eye or blockage in the drainage area where the cornea and iris meet,” said Steven Rhee, D.O., Cornea Specialist at [Hawaiian Eye Center](#). Those with normal eye pressure can also develop glaucoma and it’s believed to be caused by poor blood flow to the optic nerve.

There are two primary types of glaucoma: open-angle and angle-closure. Open-angle is the most common and progresses slowly over time. Though angle-closure is far less common, it progresses much more quickly and with a painful, sudden buildup of eye pressure because the drainage area is too narrow.

Symptoms of glaucoma usually go unnoticed until it has progressed significantly. Gradual loss of peripheral vision is a common symptom of open-angle, while angle-closure symptoms are more abrupt. Symptoms of angle-closure include severe eye pain, headache, nausea and vomiting, blurred vision, seeing haloes around lights and red eye.

Those most at risk of developing glaucoma include people:

- Aged 40 and over

- Of Hispanic, Asian or African-American descent
- With a family history of the disease
- Diagnosed with diabetes or hypertension
- Who've had an eye injury or eye surgery
- With extreme nearsightedness (myopia)
- Taking steroid medications for an extended period of time

Most of these risk factors can't be prevented and the optic nerve can't regenerate itself. But glaucoma can be successfully controlled with an early diagnosis and treatment to slow down or stop further damage. Treatment ranges from eye drops to laser surgery and microsurgery, which helps to lower eye pressure.

Those 40 and over should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam every two to three years from an eye care professional to check for glaucoma and other eye diseases. People mostly likely to develop glaucoma should get an eye exam once a year, including those 40 and over with other risk factors or those 60 and over.

Christopher Tortora, M.D., and Steven Rhee, D.O., are board-certified ophthalmologists at Hawaiian Eye Center. Dr. Tortora and Dr. Rhee also host "The Hawaiian Eye Show," a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision broadcast live every Saturday at 8 a.m. on KHVH 830 AM. Hawaiian Eye's dedicated doctors and support staff are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call 621-8448 or visit HawaiianEye.com. "For over 40 years, life has never looked better."

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