

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

By **HOLLY HOCKENBERRY**

LEWISTOWN — January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month, an important time to spread the word about this sight-stealing disease. Glaucoma is called “the sneak thief of sight” since there are no symptoms and once vision is lost, it’s permanent. As much as 40 percent of vision can be lost without a person noticing.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness. More than 4 million Americans, and nearly 70 million people worldwide, have glaucoma. Experts estimate that half of them

don’t know they have it. Combined with our aging population, we can see an epidemic of blindness looming if we don’t raise awareness about the importance of regular eye examinations to preserve vision.

Help to raise awareness

Talk to friends and family about glaucoma. If you have glaucoma, don’t keep it a secret. Let your family members know. Refer a friend to the website, www.glaucoma.org. Request to have a free educational booklet sent to you or a friend.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steal sight without warning. Although the most common forms primarily affect the middle-aged and elderly, glaucoma can affect people of all ages. Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. This nerve acts like an electric cable over a million wires. It is responsible for carrying images from the eye to the brain.

There is no cure for glaucoma yet, however, medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss. The appropriate treatment depends upon the type of glaucoma, among other fac-

tors. Early detection is vital to stopping the progress of the disease.

Types of glaucoma

There are two main types of glaucoma: primary open angle glaucoma and angle closure glaucoma. These are marked by an increase of intraocular pressure, or pressure inside the eye. When optic nerve damage has occurred despite a normal IOP, this is called normal tension glaucoma. Secondary glaucoma refers to any case in which another disease causes or contributes to increased eye pressure, resulting in optic nerve damage and vision loss.

Facts and statistics

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world, according to the World Health Organization. In the most common form, there are virtually no symptoms. Vision loss begins with peripheral or side vision, so if you have glaucoma, you may not notice anything until significant vision is lost.

The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is a comprehensive eye examination.

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Holly Hockenberry is the volunteer coordinator at Regional Service Corp.

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Weatherization tips for a more energy efficient home

By *DoItYourself.com*

LEWISTOWN — First, test your home for air tightness. On a windy day, hold a lit incense stick next to your windows, doors, electrical boxes and other locations where there is a possible air path to the outside. If the smoke stream travels horizontally, you have located an air leak that may need caulking, sealing or weatherstripping.

- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where plumbing, dusting or electrical wiring penetrates through exterior walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.

- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.

- Look for dirty spots in your insulation, which often indicates holes where air leaks into and out of your house. You can seal the holes by stapling sheets of plastic over the holes and caulking the edges of the plastic.

- Install storm windows over single-pane windows or replace them with double-pane windows. Storm windows as much as the double R-value of single-pane windows can help reduce drafts, water condensation and frost formation. As a less costly and less permanent alternative,

you can use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the cold winter months. Remember, the plastic must be sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

- When the fireplace is not in use, keep the flue damper tightly closed. A chimney is designed specifically for smoke to escape, so until you close it, warm air escapes 24 hours a day.

- For new construction, reduce exterior wall leaks by either installing house wrap, taping the joints of exterior sheathing, or comprehensively caulking and sealing the exterior walls.

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