

# Better Access to Quality Eye Care

Nebraska's Doctors of Optometry

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**Media Contact:** Alissa Johnson  
(402) 474-7716  
[noa@assocoffice.net](mailto:noa@assocoffice.net)

## **Early Diagnosis and Treatment Can Lessen Effects of Glaucoma, the “Sneak Thief of Sight”**

*Nebraska Optometric Association emphasizes  
importance of comprehensive eye exams*

**Lincoln, NE** – Studies show that over the next 10 years the number of Americans diagnosed with glaucoma will increase by more than one million. The Nebraska Optometric Association urges people of all ages to take control of their eye health through early detection to help minimize the risk of developing glaucoma, a disease that damages the optic nerve and often results in loss of sight.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S.; however, awareness surrounding the disease is relatively low. According to data from the American Optometric Association's latest American Eye-Q® consumer survey:

- 90 percent of respondents think glaucoma is preventable—only 10 percent know it's not, but that it's treatable
- 86 percent don't know what part of vision glaucoma affects—deterioration to peripheral vision making it hard to see
- 72 percent think glaucoma has early warning signs—it does not—only an exam that dilates the eyes can show what's going on

“A yearly eye exam is the first line of defense for early detection of glaucoma,” said **Dr. Chad Hudnall, NOA President**. “Since this is a disease that often strikes without pain or other symptoms, it's crucial for patients to receive a dilated eye exam where their eye doctor can thoroughly examine the pressure and nerves inside the eyes for potential signs of the disease.”

Americans are not aware of the factors that put them most at risk for developing glaucoma: 86 percent of American Eye-Q® respondents are unaware that a person's race places them at a higher risk of developing glaucoma. According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is six to eight times more common in African Americans than Caucasians. Other risk factors include those who have a family history of glaucoma, hypothyroidism, are over age 60, or individuals who have had severe eye trauma.

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Treatment for glaucoma includes prescription eye drops and medicines to lower pressure in the eyes. In some cases, laser treatment or surgery may be effective in reducing pressure.

To find a doctor of optometry, or for additional information on glaucoma and other issues concerning eye health, please visit [www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com](http://www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com)

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**About the American Eye-Q® survey:**

*The seventh annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From May 9 – 16, 2012, using an online methodology, PSB conducted 1,009 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level) For more information, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).*

**About the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA):**

*The NOA represents over 240 doctors of optometry serving in more than 80 communities throughout the state. Doctors of Optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat, and manage disease, injuries, and disorders of the visual system, the eye, and associated structures as well as identify related systemic conditions affecting the eyes. Association members in Nebraska are also leading providers of pediatric vision care and offer two statewide public service programs to serve children. Learn more about both programs and other valuable eye care information on the Nebraska Optometric Association website at [www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com](http://www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com)*