

Glaucoma Month: Do not lose sight of the health of your eyes. Where to go if you need help



Dr. Louis T. Feldgoise, right, discusses the view of Carlos Ayala, 46, of West Palm Beach, within the Vision Van de Caridad Center in West Boynton Beach. (Matt Dean / FPG / ARCHIVE)



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Do not lose sight of your eye exams. It can cause you irreparable losses.

January is the national **glaucoma** awareness month . And thinking about it, we share some tips and information on where to get low cost health exams.

And is that "the dangerous thing about glaucoma is that many people can have it and not realize they have it, because it has no symptoms," warns Dr. Steven Litinsky, retired ophthalmologist, who works as a volunteer at the Charity Center in **Boynton Beach** .

In fact, glaucoma is known as the "sneak thief of sight", since it has no symptoms and once vision is lost, it is permanent. Up to 40% of vision can be lost without a person seeing it. note

Unfortunately, "there is nothing that can be done to prevent glaucoma. People who take steroids have more risks, but beyond that there is nothing that can be done, only treat it when it is discovered," says Litinsky, founder of Delreay Eye Associates and who says that volunteering at Caridad Center, after having He has practiced his profession for more than 41 years, "it is one of the most satisfying things I have done in my life".

Currently, there are more than 3 million people in the United States with glaucoma. The National Eye Institute projects that this number will reach 4.2 million by 2030, an increase of 58 percent.

Litinsky cautions that, although the most common forms mainly affect middle-aged and elderly people, glaucoma can affect people of all ages. Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve.

Irreversible blindness

Glaucoma is the main cause of irreversible blindness. In addition, among African-American and Latino populations, glaucoma is more prevalent. Glaucoma is 6 to 8 times more common in African-Americans than in Caucasians.

"There is no cure for glaucoma, yet. However, medication or surgery can slow or prevent further loss of vision. The right treatment depends on the type of glaucoma," warns the Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF). Early detection is vital to stop the progress of the disease.

In fact, in the US there are about 120,000 blind people due to glaucoma, which represents 9% to 12% of all cases of blindness, according to the GRF.

In combination with the aging of our population, we can see an epidemic of blindness looming if we do not create awareness about the importance of regular eye exams to preserve vision, warns the GRF.

What can you do?

Experts advise, to start, three important steps:

1. Talk with your friends and family. If you have glaucoma, do not keep it a secret. Let your family members know.
2. Recommend a friend to visit the glaucoma.org page, to learn about this disease.
3. Ask them to send you a free educational brochure for you or a friend at <http://sunsentinel.com/glaucoma>.
4. Participate in your community through fundraising events, briefings, group discussions, inviting expert speakers and more.

Where to go?

If you have health insurance take advantage and do not miss the opportunity of an annual review. Most insurance covers an annual exam.

If your insurance does not cover it or if you do not have insurance, visit somewhere where you can get an annual exam. Usually a complete exam in an optician is around \$ 70.

You can also take advantage of the services of places that offer exams at a low price.

One of them is **Broward College** which for only \$ 25 a month (\$ 45 contact lens test and adjustment) offers a wide range of ophthalmologic care that includes full visual assessment, frame and lens adjustment, contact lenses and more.

The Broward College vision clinic is located on the North Campus of Broward College in Coconut Creek, in building 41, room 164.

Schedule: The clinic is open for students, teachers and public on Mondays and Wednesdays between 9 am and 2 pm, by appointment only. For more information, call 954-201-2400 on Mondays and Wednesdays between 9 am to 3 pm, or 954-201 2080.

Another option is the **Eye of the Charity Center Clinic** in Boynton Beach, where he works as a Litinsky volunteer, one of Florida's largest non-profit and free clinics, which tends to thousands of people each year and especially immigrants.

Litinski warns that she likes to collaborate with Caridad Center because otherwise many of the people who go there would not have how to take care of their health and would have very serious problems.

"Caridad Center is the largest free clinic in Florida and it really depends on donations," says Litinsky.

This Saturday, September 26, Caridad Center will be celebrating its 30th anniversary with a gala to raise funds for the clinic. The event kicks off at 6 pm at the Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa, located at 100 S. Ocean Blvd., Manalapan, Florida.

More than 400 community and business leaders and individuals will be supporting this annual initiative. To buy tickets and register, visit <https://caridad.org/call-to-heart-ball-tickets/>

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