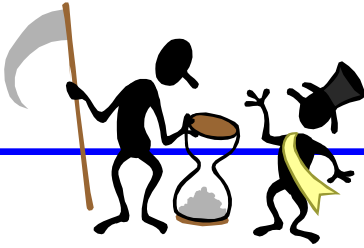


## UC BENEFITS/HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Wishing you and yours a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year!



### Understanding Asthma

Your UC Wellness committee is planning winter outdoor activities for you and your family. Look for more information coming your way with details...

Asthma is a chronic disease that plagues over 20 million Americans. Specifically, it affects a person's airways—the tubes that carry air into and out of the lungs. Asthma causes the insides of the airways to become inflamed. This makes the airways sensitive and they tend to react to “triggers” - things to which we are allergic or find irritating.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Coughing, chest tightness, fast breathing, wheezing, shortness of breath

**People with Asthma May Have:** Symptoms brought on by exercise such as running, cycling or sports coughing or wheezing brought on by bouts of laughing or crying coughing or wheezing when near an irritant such as smoke, chemicals, pet dander or pollen

**Risk Factors:** Although there are a number of “triggers” which cause an asthma attack, risk factors for asthma are largely out of our control. Risk factors include the following:

**Age:** Although asthma affects people of all ages, it often begins in childhood and affects more children than adults.

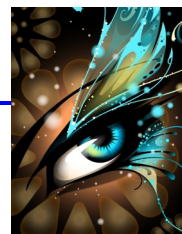
**Allergies:** Asthma is closely linked to allergies, in fact most people who have asthma will find they also have allergies.

**Gender:** More boys than girls have asthma, but in adults, more women than men suffer from asthma.

**Family History:** Those who inherit a tendency toward over-active bronchial tubes may be more likely to develop asthma.

**Treatments:**

Breathing in cold air can irritate your airwaves if you have asthma.



## NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

Everyone is at risk for glaucoma. However, certain groups are at higher risk than others. People at high risk for glaucoma should get a complete eye exam, including eye dilation, every one or two years. The following are groups at higher risk for developing glaucoma.

**African Americans:** After cataracts, glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among African Americans and people of African descent. Glaucoma is six to eight times more common in African Americans than in Caucasians.

**People Over 60:** Glaucoma is much more common among older people. You are six times more likely to get glaucoma if you are over 60 years old.

**Family Members with Glaucoma:** The most common type of glaucoma, primary open-angle glaucoma, is hereditary. If members of your immediate family have glaucoma, you are at a much higher risk than the rest of the population. Family history increases risk of glaucoma four to nine times.

**Hispanics in Older Age Groups:** Recent studies indicate that the risk for Hispanic populations is greater than those of predominantly European ancestry, and that the risk increases among Hispanics over age 60.

**Asians:** People of Asian descent appear to be at increased risk for angle-closure glaucoma. Angle-closure glaucoma accounts for less than 10% of all diagnosed cases of glaucoma. People of Japanese descent are at higher risk for normal-tension glaucoma.

**Steroid Users:** Some evidence links steroid use to glaucoma. A 1997 study reported in the Journal of American Medical Association demonstrated a 40% increase in the incidence of ocular hypertension and open-angle glaucoma in adults who require approximately 14 to 35 puffs of steroid inhaler to control asthma. This is a very high dose, only required in cases of severe asthma.

**Eye Injury:** Injury to the eye may cause secondary open-angle glaucoma. This type of glaucoma can occur immediately after the injury or years later. Blunt injuries that “bruise” the eye (called blunt trauma) or injuries that penetrate the eye can damage the eye’s drainage system, leading to traumatic glaucoma. The most common cause is sports-related injuries such as baseball or boxing.



### Other Risk Factors

Other possible risk factors include:

- High myopia (nearsightedness)
- Hypertension

Central corneal thickness less than .5 mm.

Glaucoma Research Foundation. Last reviewed on January 13, 2011

Glaucoma is an eye disease that gradually steals vision. There are typically no early warning signs or painful symptoms of open-angle glaucoma. It develops slowly and sometimes without noticeable sight loss for many years. By the time a patient is aware of vision loss, the disease is usually quite advanced. Without proper treatment, glaucoma can lead to blindness. The good news is that with regular eye exams, early detection, and treatment, you can preserve your vision.