

Eye exam needed to find glaucoma

Glaucoma, which develops slowly and usually without any symptoms, is not preventable, but it is treatable, according to the Eye Care Council.

"Many people incorrectly believe optometrists can prevent glaucoma, but unfortunately that's not accurate," said Dr. Julie Toon, a Wichita eye specialist and president of the Eye Care Council. "At the same time, many people do not do the one thing that can help catch glaucoma early — get a regular eye examination."

Toon said Eye Care Council member optometrists are joining colleagues nationwide this month to observe National Glaucoma Awareness Month.

"Glaucoma is often referred to as 'the sneak thief of sight' because it can strike without pain or other symptoms," said Dr. Gregory Wolfe, a glaucoma expert with the American Optometric Association. "Vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored, so early detection and treatment are paramount."

Glaucoma, the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S., actually is a group of disorders characterized by loss of optic nerve tissue — the bundle that transmits visual signals from the eye to the brain. The most common form of glaucoma occurs with an increase in the fluid pressure inside the eye, initially affecting peripheral or side vision, but which may cause progressive damage or even blindness.

A less common type of glaucoma can result from a rapid increase of pressure in the eye, often accompanied by severe eye pain, nausea, redness in the eye, seeing colored rings around lights and blurred vision. If this occurs, seek immediate medical attention because severe vision loss can occur quickly.

Itchy, dry skin may indicate dehydration

Cracked lips and chapped skin can be signs that people are drying out internally, too.

"Most of us know dehydration can be life-threatening in summer. But, we may not realize it can have year-round impacts on health, comfort and even thinking..." said Mary Knapp, State of Kansas climatologist, based with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

In winter, the first symptoms of dehydration are dry, itchy and sometimes painful skin conditions. Dehydration also can cause a dry, hacking cough. It leads to shocks of static electricity. It reduces ability to fight off colds, flu, skin infections and a host of other seasonal ills, Knapp said.

Outdoor and indoor conditions both sap moisture as the logical outcome of a measure many don't understand, the climatologist said.

"The confusion is: The reported relative humidity can mean something quite different in summer and winter," Knapp explained. "You see, it represents not only the air's current moisture content but also the temperature."

When air is totally saturated with water vapor so can't contain any more, its relative humidity is 100 percent. And, snow or rain is possible, she said. In turn, a relative humidity reading of 75 percent means the air's moisture content right now is three-fourths of its current saturation point.

"The 'current' part of that definition is what keeps things interesting," Knapp said. "The ... higher the air temperature, the more water vapor it can contain. So, the amount of water needed to reach saturation increases as the temperature goes up, and it shrinks as the temperature goes down."

"That's why a 75 percent relative humidity ... can make you feel like you're having to swim through the air in summer. Yet, it can feel ... dry during winter, especially ... with a cold wind."

When winter's comparatively dry air enters a house through the furnace, the air's already-low humidity plummets, because the furnace raises the air's temperature. In turn, humans and wood furniture may suffer unless kept supplied with moisturizer or a humidifier.

"But, humans also can drink lots of water — despite the fact sweating isn't usually a winter issue," Knapp said.

To catch glaucoma early, eye doctors recommend an annual dilated eye examination for people at risk for the disease. Depending on your specific condition, your doctor may recommend more frequent exams.

According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, African-Americans ages 45 to 65 are 14 to 17 times more likely than Caucasians to go blind from glaucoma. Other high-risk groups include people who have a family history of glaucoma, are over age 60 or have had severe eye trauma. Some studies suggest high levels of nearsightedness, cardiovascular disease and diabetes may also be risk factors.

Slow train hits car playing loud music

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) — Police say a man who was apparently so distracted by loud music that he didn't notice a freight train moving toward him before it struck his

Children's musical to visit area schools

The Wichita Children's Theatre Professional Touring Company will present an original musical about Kansas history, "Kansans Kan," in Atwood, Colby, Brewster and Goodland on Thursday and next Friday.

Performances Thursday will be at 9:30 a.m. at the Atwood Elementary School, and 2 p.m. at Colby Elementary and Middle School. Friday performances will be: 9:30 a.m. at Brewster Schools and 2 p.m. (Central Time) at Goodland Elementary School.

The show, by Kevin M. Reese, chronicles the evolution of Kansas from its earliest history

through the eyes and words of some of its more famous (and infamous) participants. It highlights some of the Kansas people and events that have gone on to make an impact on our country — and the world.

The company performs from September through February in Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Its performance is being sponsored here by the Western Plains Arts Association, the Directors Fund at the Thomas County Community Foundation and the Kansas Arts Commission.

car just behind the driver's door. Sgt. Jerry Odlin tells the *Missoulian* the man's car was demolished in the crash early Sunday, but the driver was not injured.

No alcohol or drugs were involved. Odlin says the driver, a Missoula man in his 30s, likely will be cited for failing to stop at a railroad crossing signal.

Chamber groups to perform in Hays

A new concert program sponsored by the Fort Hays State University Department of Music and Theatre, the Cottonwood Artist Series, will begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 2, in the Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center.

The Parker Quartet, a world-renowned chamber music ensemble formed in 2002 at the New England Conservatory, Boston, will headline the opener.

The Cottonwood Series, said Ben Morris-Cline, chair of the Department of Music and Theatre, "aims to showcase world-class small ensembles and soloists that would otherwise never be heard in Hays."

The Parker Quartet has been praised in *The New York Times* and in *The Boston Globe*. The quartet won the Concert Artists Guild Competition in 2005 and took the Mozart Prize and the Grand Prix at the 2005 Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition in France. They also won

the 2009-2011 Cleveland Quartet Award, given by Chamber Music America. The group's website is www.parkerquartet.com.

On the bill for the second performance will be the Junior Mance Quintet. Its leader was inducted into the Jazz Hall of Fame in 1997. The group will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 11, in Beach/Schmidt.

Mance's jazz career began after his discharge from the U.S. Army in 1953, when he became part of the house rhythm section at the Bee Hive Jazz Club in Chicago. He accompanied such jazz greats as Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Sonny Stitt. He also toured with Dinah Washington and Dizzie Gillespie. The group's website is www.juniormance.com.

Tickets, \$15 for adults and free for all students, are available in advance through the department (785) 628-4533 or at the door.



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