

Glaucoma

Fact or fiction?

Glaucoma always leads to blindness

Untreated glaucoma may lead to blindness. Glaucoma detected early and treated reduces damage and loss of vision.

My vision is perfect. I can't have glaucoma

Most forms of glaucoma have no symptoms and affect your peripheral vision first. This is why it is so important to have a regular eye examination with your optometrist.

My friend says exercise is bad for his glaucoma

This is not true. Studies have shown that jogging and other forms of exercise can help lower the pressure inside your eye.

Questions

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which the pressure inside the eye progressively damages the optic nerve. Glaucoma is a problem not only when the pressure is high; in some people it can cause damage when the pressure is normal or low.

What causes glaucoma?

The fluid pressure that builds up inside the eye may be caused by producing too much fluid or the fluid being blocked from leaving the eye. When this fluid pressure builds up, it can cause damage to the sensitive optic nerve cells at the back of the eye. Optic nerve cells carry messages from your eye to your brain and once damaged, vision is lost permanently.

Who gets glaucoma?

Glaucoma is more likely to occur, and you should have your eyes checked regularly for glaucoma, if:

- > You are over the age of 40 years
- > Your mother, father, brother or sister have glaucoma
- > You have diabetes, high blood pressure or another eye disease

How will I know if I have glaucoma?

Commonly, glaucoma causes no pain or discomfort, does not affect how clearly you see and progresses slowly. You may not even know if you have glaucoma. Sometimes the pressure will rise quickly and cause intense eye pain and redness. This type of glaucoma is an emergency and needs treatment as soon as possible.

How is glaucoma diagnosed?

As part of your eye examination your optometrist will:

- > Check the pressure inside your eye
- > Check your field of vision
- > Check if your optic nerve is damaged

It is common for your optometrist to put eye drops in your eyes when checking for glaucoma. They may need to take a photograph of the optic nerve for comparison at your next eye exam. Using these results and information from other tests, optometrists are able to tell if you have glaucoma or are at risk of developing glaucoma.

Can glaucoma be treated?

While glaucoma cannot be completely prevented and vision loss from glaucoma is permanent, early detection and treatment can reduce damage to the optic nerve and loss of vision. Glaucoma is usually treated with prescription eye drops. Once diagnosed with glaucoma, you will need treatment for life. Sometimes, eye drops alone will not control the damage to the optic nerve and laser treatment or surgery is needed.

What support is there for glaucoma sufferers?

Glaucoma Australia is a national organisation dedicated to supporting glaucoma sufferers and to raise funds for research. For more information about Glaucoma Australia, call 1800 500 880 or visit www.glaucoma.org.au



For more information and help to select the treatments that meet all your eye care and lifestyle needs, ask your optometrist or visit goodvisionforlife.com.au

Your optometrist