

# GLAUCOMA



Glaucoma is an eye disease that typically has no symptoms and can cause blindness that starts at the outer edges of vision so that it is undetectable. The most common risk factor for glaucoma is elevated eye pressure, which is checked during a comprehensive eye examination. The pressure of the inside of the human eye is not felt by the person, so it can be significantly high without any symptoms.

The increased pressure can cause painless and permanent damage to the optic nerve head that enters the back of the eye from the brain. This damage results in death of some of the one million cells that carry electrical signals from the eye to the brain.

Glaucoma does not always have a known cause. Some other glaucoma risk factors include African descent, family history, age over 60, and extreme nearsightedness. Since the parts of the eyes that become damaged in glaucoma are easily seen by eye doctors, glaucoma can be detected at its earliest stages if a person has regular eye examinations.

In rare cases, glaucoma can cause eye pain, clouded vision, and sudden loss of vision. Anyone who has a fast onset of these symptoms should have contact an eye doctor assessment immediately. If deemed appropriate, special surgery can relieve eye pressure and save vision.

In all other glaucoma cases, the typical treatment is the use of eyedrops that lower the amount of fluid inside the eye. These drops are very tolerable and can be taken for life, unless they lose their effect or cause allergic or irritative side effects. Drops can be supplemented by special laser surgeries, and in some advanced cases glaucoma must be treated by special surgery called drainage procedures.

Eye doctors monitor for glaucoma risk by testing eye pressure, examining the optic nerve through dilated pupils and specialized photography, and by testing side vision with computers. Glaucoma is manageable and can be kept at non-threatening levels for life with early detection and treatment.

Please make time to have a complete eye and vision examination annually.