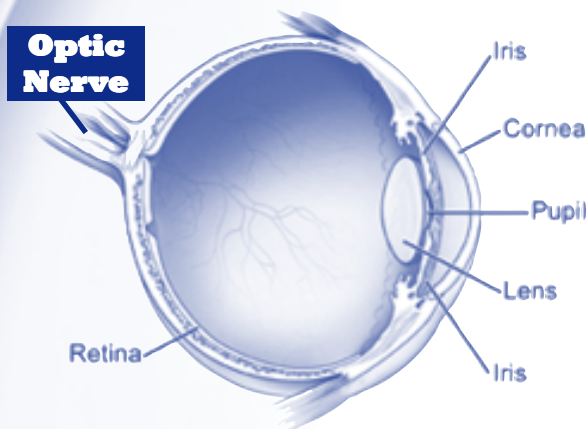




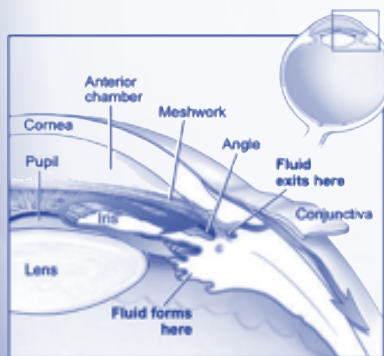
# GLAUCOMA NEWSLETTER

## WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

**G**laucoma is a chronic eye disease that affects an estimated three million Americans. Glaucoma is a family of eye diseases that have different mechanisms, but all result in optic nerve damage in the eye.



*The optic nerve of the inner eye is the most sensitive to damage from glaucoma.*



Fluid pressure and blood circulation within the eye are the major factors in the cause and progress of this disease. Perhaps, no other eye disease is quite as symptom-less as glaucoma. In many cases, it goes undetected because the

deterioration of vision is so gradual that the patient doesn't notice a problem until significant vision loss occurs. If glaucoma goes untreated, it can result in permanent vision loss. Oddly, glaucoma is not uncommon. It accounts for over 10% of all blindness. For the non-diabetic population, it is the leading cause of blindness in the United States. Half of those who have glaucoma do not know that they have the disease.

## EARLY DETECTION IS IMPORTANT

While no one knows what causes glaucoma, several factors may contribute to the development of the disease. Race and age play an important role. Other contributing factors include diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure). Prompt diagnosis and proper treatment are our first line of defense against this sight-stealing condition. Due to a lack of noticeable symptoms, we recommend that all of our patients have regular eye examinations for early detection of glaucoma. Your visit should include a dilated examination of the optic nerve, a visual fields examination, and measurement of the fluid pressure inside the eye.



The doctor may also evaluate the fluid drainage system of the eye. The optic nerve of the eye is very sensitive to the pressures within. New tissue is not produced to replace damaged nerve tissue. Therefore, all reduction of vision due to nerve damage from glaucoma is permanent.

*Thusly it is imperative that this disease be detected early, ideally, before nerve damage occurs.*

*A publication of  
Vision Salon Eye Care Associates  
Adult & Pediatric  
Comprehensive Eye Care*

*"Where there is no vision,  
the people perish..." Proverbs 29:18*

## THOSE AT HIGH RISK FOR GLAUCOMA

Everyone is at risk for glaucoma, however, certain groups are at higher risk than others. It is recommended that people at high risk for glaucoma receive a complete eye exam that includes eye dilation every one to two years.

**African-Americans:** Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among African-Americans and is six to eight times more common in African-Americans than Caucasians.

**People Over 60:** People over the age of 60 are six times more likely to develop glaucoma than those younger.

**Hereditary:** If you have family members (especially immediate family members) with glaucoma, this puts you at a much higher risk than the rest of the population. Family history increases risk of glaucoma four to nine times as compared to those who do not have glaucoma in their family.

**Steroid use:** There is some evidence that links steroid use to glaucoma. For the most part, there seems to be no serious effects. However, a study reported in the Journal of American Medical Association, March 5, 1997, 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 and is only required in the cases of severe asthma.

**Eye Injury:** Glaucoma can occur as the result of an eye injury immediately after the injury or years later. This is also known as traumatic glaucoma and is most often the result of a blunt trauma such as a blow to the head or an injury directly to the eye. Most traumatic glaucoma occurs commonly as a result

of sports related injuries such as baseball or boxing. When a blunt trauma occurs, it can cause damage to the ocular drainage system resulting in traumatic glaucoma. Glaucoma can also be caused by a penetrating injury.

## MOST COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GLAUCOMA

**Myth #1:** Glaucoma is a disease that only happens to older people.

**Truth:** Everyone is at risk for glaucoma, from babies to senior citizens. Yes, older people are at a higher risk for glaucoma, but babies and young adults develop glaucoma. Approximately one out of every 10,000 babies born in this country is born with glaucoma. African-Americans are especially susceptible at a younger age than Caucasians.

**Myth #2:** Glaucoma is curable.

**Truth:** Glaucoma is not curable, however, it is manageable. Often glaucoma can be managed with medication and/or surgery. This means that further loss of vision may be halted. However, glaucoma is a chronic disease that must be treated for life.

**Myth #3:** There are symptoms that will warn you of glaucoma.

**Truth:** With open angle glaucoma, (the most common form), there are virtually no symptoms. There is usually no pain involved with the rise in eye pressure. Loss of vision begins with peripheral or side vision. This type of vision loss can be easily compensated for (by turning the head to the side) and may not be noticed until significant vision is lost. The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is to be tested so that if you have glaucoma, treatment can begin immediately.

**Myth #4:** Glaucoma does not cause blindness.

**Truth:** Glaucoma can, in fact, cause blindness if it is left untreated. Unfortunately approximately 10% of people with glaucoma who receive proper treatment still experience loss of vision.

## HOW IS GLAUCOMA TREATED?


Glaucoma is either treated with medication (most often in the form of eye drops), surgery, or, in some cases, both. Both eye drops and surgery work by helping the fluid to drain from the eye and/or decreasing the amount of fluid that is produced in the eye.

Glaucoma medications come in different strengths and combinations. Doctors try to use the smallest amount of medication that needed to obtain the best results with the least amount of side effects. Medications must be taken regularly on a daily, basis to control the pressure in your eye. Most medications have some side effects. Usually, these side effects lessen after a few weeks.

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