

What You Need to Know About Glaucoma

What Is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a complicated group of diseases in which damage to the optic nerve leads to progressive irreversible vision loss. Abnormally high pressure inside your eye (intraocular pressure) usually, but not always, causes this damage.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness.

Who Is at Higher Risk?

- African Americans
- People older than age 60
- People with family members who have glaucoma
- Hispanics in older age groups
- Asians
- Steroid users
- People with an eye injury
- People with high myopia (nearsightedness)
- People with hypertension
- People with central corneal thickness less than 0.5 mm.

Early detection, through regular and complete eye exams, is the key to protecting your vision from damage caused by glaucoma. A complete eye exam includes 5 common tests to detect glaucoma.

It is important to have your eyes examined regularly. Your eyes should be tested:

- Before age 40, every 2 to 4 years
- From age 40 to age 54, every 1 to 3 years
- From age 55 to 64, every 1 to 2 years
- After age 65, every 6 to 12 months
- Anyone with high risk factors should be tested every 1 to 2 years after age 35.

How Can Glaucoma be Treated?

Glaucoma can be treated with medication (eye drops), laser therapy, or surgery. This treatment aims to lower intraocular pressure, thereby reducing the risk of impaired vision or blindness. Glaucoma cannot be cured, however, because existing damage to the optic nerve cannot be reversed. Eye drops are used both as prevention and treatment to lower the intraocular pressure. Depending on the specific product, you use them either once or several times a day. If eye drops are not enough, or if they are not well-tolerated, surgery can be an option for permanently lowering intraocular pressure to certain target levels.