



HEALTH INFORMATION

Glaucoma

What is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a term that describes a group of eye conditions that affect vision. Glaucoma often affects both eyes, usually in varying degrees glaucoma occurs when the drainage tubes (trabecular meshwork) within the eye become slightly blocked. This prevents eye fluid (aqueous humour) from draining properly. When the fluid cannot drain properly, pressure builds up. You qualify for an NHS funded sight test if you are aged 40 or over and are the parent, sibling or child diagnosed with glaucoma, or if you have been advised by an ophthalmologist you are at risk of glaucoma.

Symptoms

- Intense pain
- Redness of the eye
- Headache
- Tender eye area
- Seeing halos or 'rainbow-like' rings around lights
- Misty vision
- Loss of vision in one or both eyes that progresses very quickly
- It is often unclear why the drainage tubes become blocked or why other parts of the eye obstruct the tubes

Treatment

- Eye drops
- Laser treatment
- Surgery

Testing

Five factors are taken into account when testing for glaucoma:

- Inner eye pressure
- Shape and colour of optic nerve
- Complete field of vision
- Angle of the eye where the iris meets the cornea
- Thickness of cornea

Causes

There are a number of things that can increase your risk of developing glaucoma:

- Age – glaucoma becomes more likely as you get older.
- Ethnic origin – people of african or afro-caribbean origin are at increased risk of developing chronic open-angle glaucoma.
- Short sightedness (myopia) – people who are shortsighted are more likely to develop chronic open-angle glaucoma
- Ocular hypertension (oht – raised pressure in the eye)
- Family history – if you have a close relative, such as a parent, brother or sister who has glaucoma, you are at increased risk of developing the condition yourself
- Medical history – people with diabetes, may be at increased risk of developing glaucoma

Treating glaucoma

Any damage to your vision caused by glaucoma cannot be repaired. This is why it is so important to diagnose glaucoma early so it can be treated and further damage can be prevented. The aim of treatment for every type of glaucoma is to reduce the pressure in the affected eye, called intraocular pressure.

For further information go to:

www.glaucoma-association.com / www.rnib.org.uk