

Information about glaucoma / what is glaucoma?

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What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the name of an eye condition in which the optic nerve develops signs of damage. In some cases, damage is caused by raised eye pressure. Others have an eye pressure within normal limits but damage still occurs because of a weakness of the optic nerve.

The most common form of glaucoma is chronic open angle glaucoma where eye pressure rises very slowly. If untreated, over many months or years, the field of vision gradually becomes impaired. Chronic glaucoma is more common with increasing age. It is uncommon below the age of 40, affecting 1% of people over this age and about 5% over 65. If you have a close relative who has chronic glaucoma, then you should have regular eye tests. This is especially important if you are age over 40.

Acute glaucoma is much less common. This happens when there is a sudden rise in eye pressure. It can be quite painful and can cause permanent damage to sight if not treated properly.

How is glaucoma detected?

Tests for chronic glaucoma are carried out as part of a regular eye test. Viewing the optic nerve by shining a light from a special torch into your eye, measuring the eye pressure using one special instrument and testing your fields of vision with another, which shows a sequence of spots of light on a screen.

How is glaucoma treated?

The main treatment for chronic glaucoma aims to reduce the eye pressure. It is usually started with eye drops but can involve a small operation to reduce the pressure. Immediate hospital treatment may be required with acute glaucoma.

Can glaucoma be cured?

Although damage already done cannot be repaired, with early diagnosis and treatment, damage can usually be kept to a minimum.



Optic disc showing moderate cupping - a sign of glaucoma.