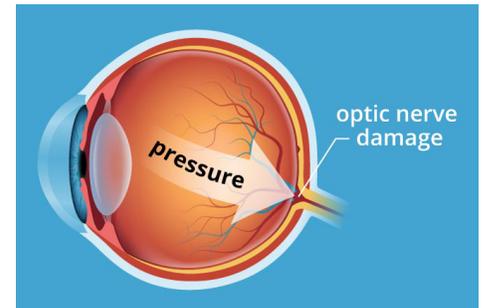




What Is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that cause vision loss by damaging the optic nerve, the part of the eye that sends images to the brain. The optic nerve is made up of millions of nerve fibers, and when the pressure inside the eye builds up, damage to these fibers occurs.



www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/glaucoma.htm

Types of Glaucoma

Primary open-angle glaucoma: This is the most common form of glaucoma. It may occur when the eye's drainage system becomes less efficient, resulting in a buildup of eye pressure. This pressure can ultimately damage the optic nerve, causing peripheral vision loss initially and can lead to blindness. Primary open-angle glaucoma can develop slowly and be entirely symptom free in the beginning thus early detection is imperative to prevent vision loss.

Acute angle-closure glaucoma: This is a less common form, it occurs when the drainage canals become completely blocked, resulting in a sudden rise in intra-ocular pressure.

A number of symptoms may occur:

- » Headache
- » Blurred vision
- » Severe eye pain
- » Halos around lights
- » Nausea

Should any of the above symptoms occur, seek immediate medical attention, as this is a true eye emergency which could lead to blindness.

Other Types of Glaucoma

- » **Normal tension glaucoma:** a condition that develops even though the intraocular pressure is within the normal range.
- » **Secondary glaucoma:** can result from an from eye injury, inflammation, tumor or advanced cases of cataract or diabetes.
- » **Congenital/pediatric glaucoma:** forms of glaucoma diagnosed very early in life.

Glaucoma usually effects both eyes, although one eye may be more severely affected than the other.



Symptoms

Depending on the type of glaucoma and its stages, there may be no symptoms at all. It may be painless and go undetected for years. However, if enough optic nerve fibers are damaged, peripheral vision may be reduced, and if left untreated, central vision may also eventually deteriorate. This is why annual eye exams are so important for those at risk for glaucoma, as the condition may be diagnosed by an eye doctor before the patient is even aware of it.

Risk Factors for Glaucoma

- » Age over 60
- » African, Hispanic, or Asian heritage
- » Family history of glaucoma
- » High eye pressure
- » History of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, past eye injury
- » Use of steroid medication



Treatments

- » **Medication:** in most cases, initial treatment involves the daily use of eyedrops. Compliance is extremely important in order to keep intraocular pressure under control.
- » **Laser Surgery:** usually performed in your doctor's office or clinic to help fluid drain from the eye, ultimately to lower intraocular pressure and keep it under control.
- » **Conventional Surgery:** performed in the operating room and often after medication and laser surgery have failed to control eye pressure. The goal of surgery is again to lower the pressure within the eye.

nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma/glaucoma_facts

Prevention

There are no known ways to prevent glaucoma. However, early detection of the condition will mean it can be managed more effectively, resulting in less damage to vision. Regular comprehensive dilated eye exams (performed more frequently for those at greater risk) are often the best way to detect glaucoma, as it is so often symptom free.



For more information on living with vision loss, contact
Lighthouse Low Vision Services at: (206) 436-2154
OR
bit.ly/LighthouseLVS

References:

Glaucoma Facts, National Eye Institute
nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma/glaucoma_facts

What is Glaucoma? American Academy of Ophthalmology
www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma

Glaucoma: Types, Causes, and Symptoms
www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/9710.php