



Westport Eyecare

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WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which the nerve fibers in the optic nerve are damaged and cause vision loss. It is one of the leading causes of blindness in the U.S. and has greatest prevalence in people over 40. Though less common, it can also occur in younger individuals as well as infants.

WHAT CAUSES GLAUCOMA?

There are several ways that glaucoma can develop. The most common type of glaucoma develops gradually and painlessly, without symptoms. The internal pressure inside the eyes increases enough to damage the nerve fibers in the optic nerve, which subsequently causes vision loss. The increase in pressure can happen when the drainage passageways inside the eye become clogged or blocked. Although this is sometimes due to certain eye shapes and configurations, other causes are not known.

A rarer type of glaucoma occurs rapidly, and its symptoms may include blurred vision, loss of side vision, seeing colored rings around lights, and pain or redness in the eyes.

AM I AT RISK?

Certain factors or predispositions can increase the risk for developing glaucoma. However, many people who develop glaucoma do not have any previous risk factors. These include:

- Family history of glaucoma
- African-American heritage
- Very near-sighted people
- Diabetic people



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WHAT CAN I DO?

Unfortunately, glaucoma cannot be prevented, but if diagnosed and treated early, it can be controlled. Vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored, but proper treatment can significantly reduce the likelihood of further vision loss. Annual eye examinations are recommended for people who are at risk for glaucoma, and depending on your condition, your doctor may recommend more frequent visits.

The comprehensive examination will include an eye pressure test, an evaluation of the condition of the optic nerve for any early signs of damage, and an examination of the retina (the nerve layer inside the eyes). A visual field test to check for changes in central and side vision may also be performed. Each test component examines a different aspect of your eyes, and your doctor will utilize all the information to help manage your specific case.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR GLAUCOMA?

The treatment for glaucoma often includes prescription eye drops and medicines to lower the eye pressure. Since glaucoma is a painless and chronic disease, patients with glaucoma must keep taking their drops on a regular basis. Your doctor will need to see you for regular checks to help monitor the eye pressure and optic nerve condition. In some extreme cases, your doctor may refer you to a specialist for laser treatment or surgery if medicines do not adequately control your eye pressure.

REMEMBER: GLAUCOMA IS A PAINLESS BUT POTENTIALLY BLINDING DISEASE!