

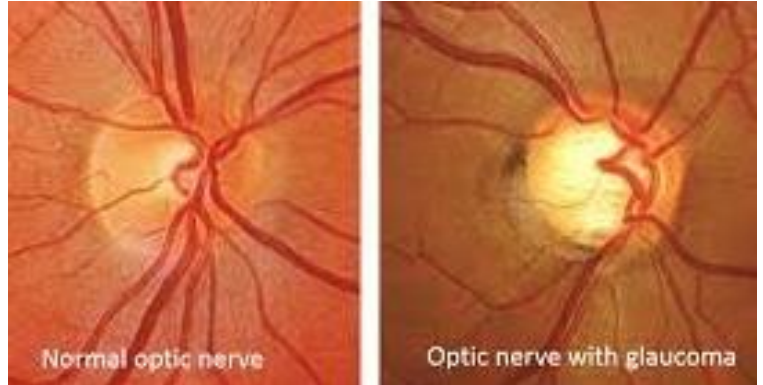
Glaucoma

WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

Glaucoma is a term that encompasses a group of eye conditions all characterised by progressive thinning of the optic nerve over time.

One optic nerve is located in each eye and it transfers all of the information we see back to the brain for processing.

Usually the optic nerve is damaged in glaucoma by increased pressure inside the eyes, although not all forms of glaucoma are associated with high eye pressure.



If glaucoma is left untreated, irreversible blindness can occur. This usually begins as loss of far peripheral vision which is very difficult for you to notice.

If left untreated for many years, then complete loss of vision may occur.

WHAT CAUSES GLAUCOMA?

The exact causes of glaucoma are not known.

In some cases, the drainage network of the eye may not be formed properly or may become blocked by natural materials or during eye injury; in other cases, there is no clear cause.

There is however a strong genetic link meaning that you are at a much higher risk of developing glaucoma if a family member also has glaucoma.

IS THE DAMAGE THAT OCCURS IN GLAUCOMA SERIOUS?

If untreated, glaucoma can cause blindness.

As the optic nerve is progressively damaged, the ability to see objects in different parts of the visual field is lost. This can progress until only central vision is left or until the person is completely blind.

The longer the disease is left untreated, the greater is the likelihood of damage.

Once damage has occurred, it cannot be reversed although often it is possible to prevent further damage.

Modern examination techniques and treatment have made glaucoma a rare cause of blindness in Australia.



Gulf & Ranges
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HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE GLAUCOMA?

Often you will not be aware that you have glaucoma until it is too late.

Usually there are no symptoms until permanent damage has occurred. In a rare form of glaucoma, known as angle closure glaucoma, very high eye pressure will cause blurred vision, apparent coloured rings around lights, loss of side vision, and pain and redness of the eye.

In many genetic cases, glaucoma is an inherited disease that is passed on within families. Direct family members (parents, siblings, children) have the greatest risk, 10 times higher than others of developing glaucoma themselves - almost a 1 in 4 chance of glaucoma in their lifetime.

HOW DOES AN OPTOMETRIST DIAGNOSE GLAUCOMA?

To diagnose glaucoma the optometrist looks at the nerve fibres within the optic nerves, examines the eye's drainage network, measures the pressure in the eye and tests the field of vision.

These tests are simple and painless.

At Gulf & Ranges we can accurately diagnose and manage glaucoma using our OCT Angiographer and visual field analyser among other state of the art technology.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY GLAUCOMA?

Common risk factors include :

- being over 40 years of age,
- being of African American or Hispanic descent,
- having high myopia (short-sightedness),
- diabetes,
- high blood pressure,
- previous eye surgeries and injuries
- prior corticosteroid use including steroidal nasal sprays, inhalers, skin creams and oral steroids

The other major risk factor is family history of glaucoma.

HOW IS GLAUCOMA TREATED?

Initially, prescription eye drops are used to treat glaucoma. For more advanced cases laser procedures and surgeries may be required.



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