

GLAUCOMA FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases, often associated with eye pressure, that destroys the optic nerve. The optic nerve is the cable that connects the eye to the brain. Optic nerve damage causes shrinking of the visual field and, eventually, blindness.

Why is glaucoma such a serious eye condition?

It causes irreversible blindness. Unlike blindness caused by cataracts which can be reversed with cataract surgery, vision lost due to glaucoma is gone forever.

How big a problem is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the 2nd leading cause of irreversible blindness in the world. One study estimates that 60.5 million people worldwide have glaucoma with 8.4 million of them blind in both eyes.¹

In the Philippines, glaucoma is the 3rd leading cause of blindness in both eyes and is the leading cause of irreversible blindness of both eyes.²

Who are at risk for glaucoma?

Glaucoma can occur at any age but by far the most commonly affected are older individuals. Persons with the following risk factors have a higher chance of developing or having glaucoma:

- Elevated intraocular pressure (eye pressure)
- Family history of glaucoma
- Age over 50

These persons should have themselves screened for glaucoma by an ophthalmologist (EyeMD).

What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

Most cases of glaucoma have no symptoms or very subtle symptoms. Because the vision loss starts at the

¹ Quigley H, Broman AT. British Journal of Ophthalmology. 2006.

² Cubillan LDP, Olivar-Santos E. Philippine Journal of Ophthalmology. 2005.

edges of the visual field (peripheral vision) and occurs gradually, many glaucoma sufferers do not realize that there is a problem until they have lost a large area of their vision. Ideally, people should have themselves examined so glaucoma can be detected even before symptoms occur.

A small percentage of people with glaucoma have episodes of eye pain, blurred vision, redness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and seeing rainbows around lights.

How is glaucoma diagnosed?

An ophthalmologist examines the optic nerve, measures the eye pressure, and views the fluid drain of the eye. If needed, tests to measure the field of vision and analyze the optic nerve are used. Sometimes, the diagnosis isn't definite after a few examinations and tests so monitoring is needed to check for development of glaucoma.

Can glaucoma be cured?

Glaucoma cannot be cured. Damage to the optic nerve caused by glaucoma is permanent. Glaucoma can be controlled, especially when discovered early. In certain cases, the risk of developing glaucoma can be greatly minimized by particular types of preventive treatment.

How is glaucoma treated?

Depending on the type and stage of glaucoma it can be treated with eye drops, laser or surgery. Since there is no cure, lifelong monitoring is needed.



This is a public service of the
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