

Info sheet:

Glaucoma

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that slowly damage the nerve for vision at the back of the eye ('optic nerve'). It is often linked to high pressure inside the eye but can also occur with normal pressure.

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness and vision loss in Australia. Only half of Australians with glaucoma know they have it.

Early detection and treatment can prevent or delay much of the vision loss caused by glaucoma.



Normal vision



Example of how glaucoma may affect vision

What are the symptoms?

- Often glaucoma has no symptoms until significant damage has been done to the optic nerve.
- It can lead to vision loss which often starts with the loss of peripheral (side) vision. In most cases this is gradual.
- Can develop in both eyes, but one eye may be worse than the other.
- Very rarely, people may develop a sudden-onset, painful form of glaucoma with rapid loss of vision. This is a medical emergency.

Who is at risk?

- All people aged over 40. The risk increases with age. People aged over 70 are three times more likely to develop glaucoma than those aged 40.

- People with a family history of glaucoma. They are up to eight times more likely to develop the condition.
- People of African or Asian descent.
- People who have diabetes.
- People who are very short- or long-sighted.
- People who have had previous eye injuries or who take corticosteroid medications.

What can be done?

- Have regular eye tests with an eye health professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist). These should include a check of the optic nerve and eye pressure.
- Visit an eye health professional without delay if vision changes.

Early detection is essential. Don't wait for symptoms, have regular eye tests. When glaucoma is diagnosed, treatment can usually slow or stop the disease from getting worse. Treatments aim to maintain vision throughout life.

Save Your Sight – Get Tested

For more information

- Speak to an eye health professional or GP.
- Contact Glaucoma Australia on 1800 500 880 or visit www.glaucoma.org.au
- Visit www.visioninitiative.org.au

A Medicare rebate is available for most optometry services. You do not need a referral to see an optometrist. If required, your GP or optometrist can refer you to an ophthalmologist.

There are services and supports to help people adjust to vision loss, remain independent and continue to participate in their chosen activities. Speak to an eye health professional or your GP to find out more.



A partnership promoting eye health and vision care



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