



Glaucoma: Early Detection Can Save Your Sight

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in the U.S. With early diagnosis and treatment, the most people can retain their vision for life.

What is glaucoma?

In a healthy eye, fluid is constantly being made and drained through a microscopic, drainage canal. When something blocks or prevents this natural drainage, the pressure inside the eye goes up. Glaucoma is often caused by increased pressure that can develop when the fluids in the eye are not draining properly. This condition eventually damages the nerve that connects the eye to the brain (the optic nerve) and leads to loss of vision.

What are the symptoms?

While occasionally, the condition may come on suddenly; most cases progress so slowly there are often no warning signs before damage inside the eye has already occurred. In most cases, a person's side vision (peripheral vision) is noticeably affected.

Am I at Risk?

While the causes for glaucoma are not completely known, we do know that risk factors for its development include family history, race and older age. Glaucoma may affect people of any age from newborns to the elderly but is more common in adults as they approach their senior years. African-Americans, Hispanics and people with diabetes are also at higher risk of getting the disease.

How is glaucoma treated?

Glaucoma can be treated with any of the following:

- Eye drops that lower eye pressure
- Laser therapy that allows for better drainage of fluids inside the eye
- Eye surgery to create a new drainage canal

If not treated, glaucoma can and does lead to total blindness. Glaucoma is easily detected with a medical eye examination. Ophthalmologists (medical eye doctors) can measure the pressure inside the eye with a quick and painless, office test.

Glaucoma doesn't have to interfere with leading a happy, sighted and fulfilling life. Detecting the disease early can save your sight!