



FAQ—Glaucoma

1. What is Glaucoma?

The term "Glaucoma" describes a group of diseases that cause progressive damage to the optic nerve in the back of the eye. This damage causes progressive visual loss. However, this loss does not cause symptoms in the early stages. Only regular eye exams can detect glaucoma early. One type of glaucoma, called Narrow Angle Glaucoma, causes a sudden onset of a very painful, red eye, and must be treated as soon as possible in order to prevent permanent damage. Only about 10% of glaucoma is this type.

2. How is Glaucoma detected?

*During a comprehensive exam, we measure the eye pressure (tonometry) and we visually examine the optic nerves in the back of the eyes. While high eye pressure may be a sign of glaucoma, the observation of the optic nerves is even more important, since we can see signs of damage. If we do see evidence that glaucoma may be present, and/or you have other risk factors, then we will perform further tests. Stereoscopic photos of your optic nerves help us look for damage, and allow us to look for changes in your optic nerves over time. A visual field test checks your peripheral vision, which is affected by damage to the optic nerve. **Glaucoma cannot be detected with any one test.***

3. What are the risk factors for Glaucoma?

As with many disease conditions, the risk of developing glaucoma increases with age. People who are nearsighted (myopic) or African-American have a higher risk. People with a family history of glaucoma have a higher risk.

4. How is Glaucoma treated?

The most common treatment for glaucoma is medication (eye drops) that lowers the pressure inside the eye. By lowering the pressure, we are attempting to reduce the chances of damage to the optic nerve. Once damage has been done, it cannot be reversed. There are surgical options for treating glaucoma, which may be used either instead of medication, or when medication is not adequately controlling the disease.

5. Is there a cure?

There is no cure for glaucoma. It is a chronic condition that requires long-term treatment and monitoring.

6. What is a Glaucoma Suspect?

A Glaucoma Suspect is someone who has one or more risk factors for Glaucoma, but does not have the optic nerve damage or peripheral vision loss that would result in a diagnosis of Glaucoma. Glaucoma Suspects need to have eye exams every year, along with special testing on a schedule that the doctor recommends to check for the development of Glaucoma.