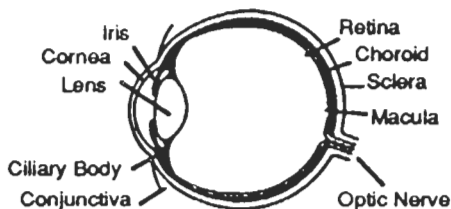


# GLAUCOMA

(828) 665-1577

## What is Glaucoma ?

Glaucoma is a serious eye disease that can result in vision loss, and even blindness, if the condition is left untreated. Glaucoma occurs when the amount of fluid inside of your eye increases. This fluid, called aqueous humor, is necessary to keep your eye clear and healthy. Aqueous humor is produced by the ciliary body within your eye, and flows around the iris, then out of the eye near the cornea.



The Human Eye

## What causes Glaucoma ?

Glaucoma occurs when the production of aqueous humor is greater than the amount that flows out of your eye. Usually, this happens because the aqueous humor drains too slowly from the eye, or because the drainage system becomes blocked. Either event will bring about a rise in the internal fluid pressure. This increased pressure tends to damage the optic nerve more than any other structure of the eye. The optic nerve is responsible for transmitting visual images to the brain. If the optic nerve becomes damaged, you will endure some amount of vision loss.

## What are the symptoms of Glaucoma ?

Normally you will not feel pain or discomfort. Nor will you notice any difference in your vision. In fact, there are no symptoms in the early stages of glaucoma. As the internal fluid pressure rises, and glaucoma begins, the first areas of vision to be affected are small areas off to your side. These small areas of peripheral vision loss are too small for you to notice. As the condition progresses, the amount of vision loss increases. If glaucoma is allowed to progress, first your peripheral vision, then your entire vision, will be lost.

### *Facts about GLAUCOMA*

- In most cases of glaucoma you can not feel any pain, nor will you notice any changes in your vision.*
- With early diagnosis and treatment, vision loss due to glaucoma is usually preventable.*
- Glaucoma can not be controlled with special diets, or over the counter, non prescription drops or medications.*
- Glaucoma occurs in about one of every 50 persons over the age of 35.*
- There is a strong hereditary influence with glaucoma.*

## How is Glaucoma detected ?

The fluid pressure inside of your eyes is measured with an instrument called a tonometer. One type of tonometer blows a mild puff of air against your eye. Other types of tonometers must be gently placed against your eye to record the pressure.

Also, your optic nerve will be inspected for damage with an instrument called an ophthalmoscope. An ophthalmoscope enables a doctor to look directly inside of your eye, to examine the inner structures of the eye.

When glaucoma is suspected, your vision will be carefully measured with a perimeter. A perimeter is an instrument which can detect small blind spots in your side vision.

## How is Glaucoma treated ?

With early treatment, the fluid pressure of your eye can be controlled with medications, before any loss of vision occurs. The medications will slow the production of aqueous humor, or increase the drainage of aqueous humor from the eye. If vision loss has occurred, medications are still needed to prevent further vision loss.

When medications can not control the fluid pressure of your eye, or if the medications are poorly tolerated, surgery may be necessary. Typically, glaucoma surgery is performed, painlessly, with the use of lasers. In other cases, a new fluid drainage system is constructed within the eye. Fortunately, medications can usually control the pressure, because glaucoma surgery is rare!