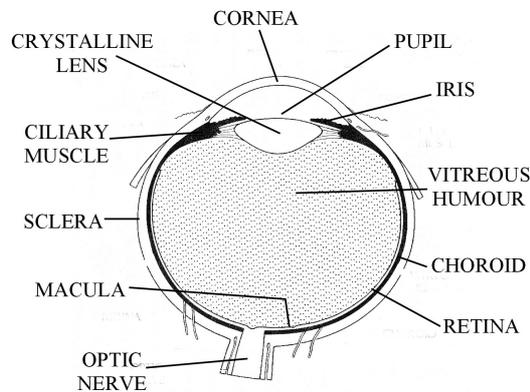


glaucoma



What is Glaucoma?

It is a group of conditions which cause damage to the optic nerve at the back of the eye, and can lead to blindness.

What causes it?

The fluid inside the eye is always being replaced. If it is produced too quickly, or if it is drained out too slowly, this can cause the pressure inside the eye to rise which in turn can lead to glaucoma.

What Are the Different Types?

There are several types of glaucoma, but the main types are Chronic Glaucoma and Acute (sudden onset) Glaucoma.

Chronic glaucoma is caused by a slow, gradual rise in the pressure inside the eye. There is no pain, and the danger with it is that your eyesight may seem to be quite normal, but it is slowly being damaged. Optometrists can detect chronic glaucoma during routine sight tests by:

- looking at the optic nerve in the back of your eye (ophthalmoscopy)
- measuring the pressure of the eye (tonometry)
- assessing your visual fields (the peripheral vision)

Some people are more at risk of chronic glaucoma than others. These include:

- people over the age of forty
- diabetics
- people of Afro-Caribbean origin
- close relatives of a glaucoma sufferer
- very short sighted people

Chronic glaucoma is usually treated with eye drops prescribed by an eye specialist. Sometimes an operation may be needed if the drops do not work.

Acute glaucoma is caused by a rapid rise in the pressure. The eye can feel stony hard, with redness and coloured haloes around lights. It is usually very painful and is often accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

People with acute glaucoma should be sent straight to the local hospital for treatment to bring down the pressure over a few hours.

It is very important to get acute glaucoma treated as quickly as possible, otherwise the vision will be permanently damaged.

Will the Vision Come Back?

No. Once the damage is done to the optic nerve, the vision cannot be restored. This is why early detection of glaucoma is so important, and free sight tests are available to everyone aged over 60, all diabetics, and all people aged over 40 with a close relative with glaucoma.

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