



## Top 5 Q & A's: Glaucoma

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### **Q. What is glaucoma?**

**A.** Glaucoma is defined as progressive damage to the optic nerve head, the connection between your eyes and brain. In early glaucoma there are no obvious symptoms, making it critical for regular eye exams. One of the first signs of advancing optic nerve damage and glaucoma is permanent peripheral or side vision loss. However, with regular exams by your eye care provider, your doctor can observe clinical signs before vision loss occurs. There are many different types of glaucoma, including open angle glaucoma and angle closure glaucoma. Your eye care professional will run a battery of tests to determine the correct diagnosis.

### **Q. What does pressure have to do with glaucoma and what is a healthy eye pressure?**

**A.** High intraocular pressure (IOP) is a known risk factor for glaucoma and currently the only treatable and modifiable risk factor. The normal range of pressures is from 12 to 22 mmHg with the national average pressure being 16mmHg. However, a diagnosis of glaucoma can still occur with pressures in this normal range. Each individual has a different acceptable range of fluctuating eye pressures. An eye care professional will determine a safe range of eye pressures for each glaucoma patient, independently.

### **Q. Who is at an increased risk for glaucoma?**

**A.** Factors that increase your risk for glaucoma include increasing age, African American or Hispanic race, high intraocular pressures, and poor general health. The older you become, the higher the risk for glaucoma, with 12% of people over the age of 63 having the disease. Being diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease increases your risk for glaucoma. Lastly, having a direct relative with glaucoma increases your risk for inheriting the disease by four to nine times.

### **Q. Will I go blind from glaucoma?**

**A.** Glaucoma is a slowly progressive disease with damage occurring over years rather than days. Central, detailed vision is preserved until end-stage glaucoma, but the risk of going blind is still a possibility. Visual loss occurs first in the periphery and spreads towards the central vision. In order to monitor your peripheral vision, your eye care professional will have you perform a visual field test which requires you to respond to lights presented in your peripheral vision.

### **Q. How is glaucoma treated?**

**A.** The main treatment goal for glaucoma patients is to lower intraocular pressure to a safe level dependent on many individual factors. Common initial treatments include daily eye drops or laser procedures. Your eye care professional will determine the best starting treatment based on each patient's case.