

Glaucoma

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a disease that damages your eye's optic nerve. It usually happens when fluid builds up in the front part of your eye. That extra fluid increases the pressure in your eye, damaging the optic nerve. Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness for people over 60 years old. But blindness from glaucoma can often be prevented with early treatment.

How is glaucoma diagnosed?

The only sure way to diagnose glaucoma is with a complete eye exam. A glaucoma screening that only checks eye pressure is not enough to find glaucoma. During a glaucoma exam, your ophthalmologist will:

- Measure your eye pressure
- Inspect your eye's drainage angle
- Examine your optic nerve for damage
- Test your peripheral (side) vision
- Take a picture or computer measurement of your optic nerve
- Measure the thickness of your cornea

How is glaucoma treated?

Glaucoma damage is permanent—it cannot be reversed. But medicine and surgery help to stop further damage. To treat glaucoma, your ophthalmologist may use one or more of the following treatments.

Medication. Glaucoma is usually controlled with eyedrop medicine. Used every day, these eye drops lower eye pressure. Some do this by reducing the amount of aqueous fluid the eye makes. Others reduce pressure by helping fluid flow better through the drainage angle. Glaucoma medications can help you keep your vision, but they may also produce side effects. All medications can have side effects.

Laser surgery. Laser surgery helps open up channel ways in the drainage system in the eye and allow improved flow and allow aqueous to drain better from the eye. This procedure is called a Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) and is usually done in the our office.

Operating room surgery. When the pressure is uncontrolled or the glaucoma has advanced, some glaucoma surgery is done in an operating room with a glaucoma specialist or at the time of cataract surgery.

Your role in glaucoma treatment

Treating glaucoma successfully is a team effort between you and your doctor. Your ophthalmologist will prescribe your glaucoma treatment. It is up to you to follow your doctor's instructions and use your eye drops. Once you are taking medications for glaucoma, your ophthalmologist will want to see you regularly. You can expect to visit your ophthalmologist about every 3–6 months. However, this can vary depending on your treatment needs.