

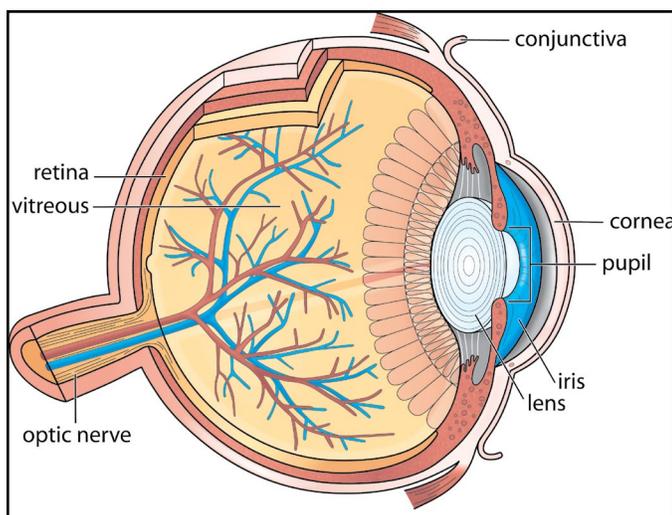
# Glaucoma

## Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which fluid pressure inside the eye is above normal. If you have glaucoma, the higher pressure can damage your optic nerve and cause vision loss or blindness.

It is one of the leading causes of blindness in the U.S. today. The National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health estimates that nearly 3 million Americans have glaucoma.

Glaucoma can't be cured, but it can be treated. Early detection and treatment is important to prevent further loss of vision.



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**In open-angle glaucoma, fluid builds up near the front of the eye. Treatment is needed or vision loss could occur.**

There are two types of glaucoma.

- Closed-angle glaucoma can be an emergency situation. Symptoms include:
  - blurry vision
  - severe eye pain
  - headache
  - nausea and vomiting.

If you have any of the symptoms listed above, call an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) right away. Left untreated, closed-angle glaucoma can cause blindness.

Closed-angle glaucoma can be prevented by regular check-ups with an eye doctor. He or she can see the narrow angle in your eye during an exam and treat it by using a laser to put a tiny hole in the iris (colored part of your eye) to make the drainage better.

- Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of the disease. The name refers to the area that allows fluid to drain from the eye. Sometimes the fluid starts to drain too slowly. The fluid builds up inside the eye and raises the pressure. If the pressure is not controlled, eye damage and loss of vision can result.

The information in this brochure is about open-angle glaucoma.

**(over)**

## Who's at Risk for Glaucoma

Anyone can develop glaucoma. You are at greater risk if you:

- are black and older than age 40
- are older than age 60
- have a family history of glaucoma.

## Signs of Open-angle Glaucoma

- **early stages** — no signs, no loss of vision and no pain
- **as it progresses** — side (peripheral) vision starts to fail
- **later stages** — field of vision narrows, sometimes leading to blindness.

## Finding Glaucoma

There are a number of tests to help detect the disease. A dilated eye exam allows your eye care provider to see the inside of your eye and check for signs of glaucoma. Your eye care provider may also do a visual field test that shows whether you have lost side vision.

## Treating Glaucoma

Your eye care provider may use medicine, laser surgery or surgery to control open-angle glaucoma.

- **Medicine (eye drops or pills).**  
Medicine may reduce the flow of fluid into your eye or improve fluid drainage. Sometimes medicine stops working. If this happens, your eye care provider may change the dosage, prescribe a new medicine or suggest another treatment.

- **Laser surgery.**

During this procedure, a laser beam is aimed at the area where fluid leaves your eye. Small changes make it easier for the fluid to drain. Sometimes the effect of laser surgery wears off. You may still need glaucoma medicine even if you have laser surgery.

- **Surgery.**

An eye surgeon makes a new opening for fluid to drain from your eye. This option is normally used only if medicine or laser surgery does not reduce eye pressure. If the new opening closes, a second surgery may be needed.

As with all surgery, glaucoma surgery has risks, such as:

- Your vision may not be as good as it was before the surgery.
- You may develop a cataract, cornea problems, eye infection or swelling of blood vessels behind your eye. There are treatments for these side effects.

**Information adapted from the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health.**