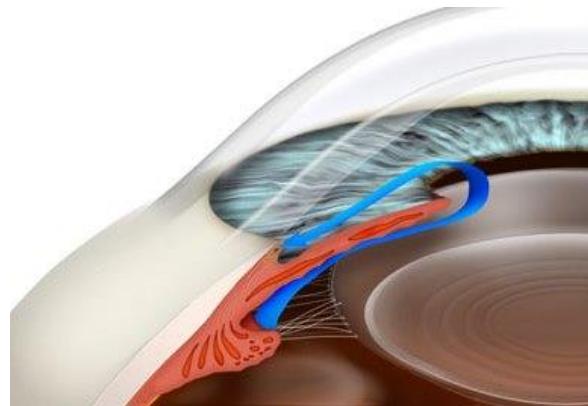


Primary open-angle glaucoma



In primary open-angle glaucoma there are usually microscopic blockages in the drainage channels of the eye that prevent fluid exiting the eye at the normal rate. This results in increased pressure.

Some patients have higher than average pressure in the eye but no damage is detectable. This is called ocular hypertension and treatment is aimed at preventing damage occurring.



Some patients have glaucoma damage occurring despite having pressures no higher than the average person. This is sometimes called normal or low tension glaucoma.

The aim of treatment is to lower the pressure in the eye. No treatment is guaranteed to work, and the effect of all treatments may fade over time. No treatment can reverse damage already caused by glaucoma. Treatments are usually tried in the following order:

1. Laser

Selective laser trabeculoplasty (SLT) is a straightforward treatment carried out during a normal clinic visit. Advantages are that it is a fairly low risk treatment which avoids having to remember to take eyedrops and avoids the toxic effects of eyedrops. The main disadvantage is that it does not work in $\frac{1}{4}$ of people.

2. Drugs

Eyedrops can be taken to lower eye pressure. They must be used lifelong. They can be toxic to the eye and can lead to pain and discomfort when used long term. They can also be absorbed into the body having toxic effects.

3. Cataract surgery

Cataract surgery removes and replaces the lens in the eye. Even if you don't have enough cataract to cause vision problems, cataract surgery can be beneficial in glaucoma. It can lower the pressure in the eye and can sometimes avoid more risky glaucoma surgery. If glaucoma surgery is needed then it is more straightforward if cataract surgery has already been performed.

4. Glaucoma surgery

In glaucoma surgery, a glaucoma drainage device or 'tube' is placed into the eye. Glaucoma surgery is more risky and has a lower success rate than cataract surgery. Glaucoma surgery will only be recommended if your doctor thinks you are more likely to go blind without surgery than with surgery.