

# The glaucomas

## What are the glaucomas?

The glaucomas are a group of eye diseases that slowly destroy the optic nerve that carries the signal from the eye to the brain. Usually peripheral vision is lost first and this vision loss often goes unnoticed. By the time a patient notices lost vision it is often too late. Glaucoma damage is permanent. Once the nerve cells are destroyed they cannot regenerate.

There are many different types of glaucoma but they all fall into two broad categories: open-angle glaucomas and angle-closure glaucomas.

## Why do I have glaucoma?

Bad luck mostly. Most of the glaucomas are more common as we get older.

## What is the treatment for glaucoma?

The type of treatment is determined by the type of glaucoma you have. The aim of treatment of angle-closure glaucoma is to open the angle (usually with lens replacement or cataract surgery) and there pressure lowering treatments as needed. The aim of treatment of open-angle glaucoma is to lower the pressure in the eye (usually with laser treatment initially).

## What is normal pressure?

Treatment is aimed at lowering the pressure until nerve damage stops or slows right down. This pressure level is individual for each patient. Some patients can have bad glaucoma but start with a lower than average pressure. Other patients can have a higher than average pressure but have mild or no glaucoma damage. Please also note that pressure can vary day to day and during the day. Thus you may get different pressures at different times just due to fluctuations.

## How is glaucoma damaged detected and monitored?

This is done by your doctor looking at the nerve inside the eye, taking photos for future comparison, field tests (you press a button when you see a dim light), and glaucoma scans (OCT).

## What can I do?

Turn up to your appointments, follow the doctor's instructions, and tell family members to get checked (glaucoma can sometimes, but not always, run in the family).

