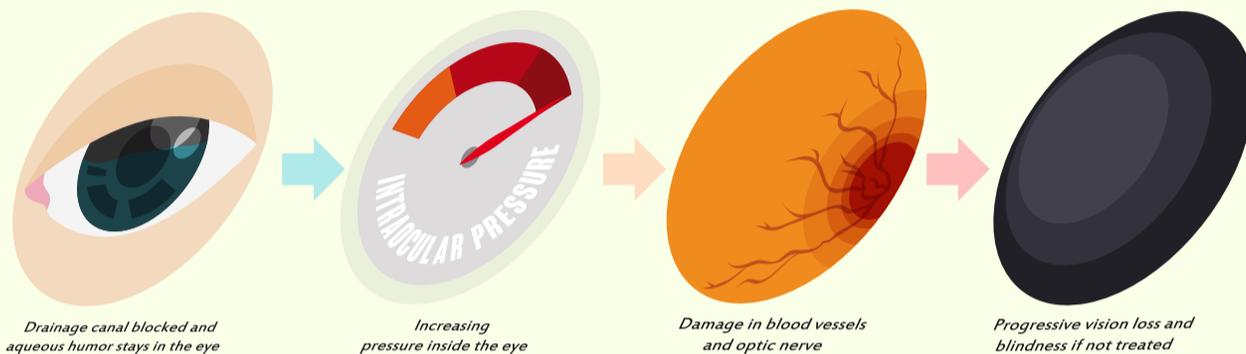


GLAUCOMA

The Sneak Thief of Sight

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world. Often thought of as a disease that targets older adults only, everyone is at risk for glaucoma. According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, over 3 million Americans have glaucoma, with half unaware they do. Approximately more than 120,000 are blind from glaucoma, accounting for 9% to 12% of all cases of blindness.



What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is often linked to a buildup of pressure inside the eye. The pressure can damage the optic nerve, which transmits images to the brain. If the damage continues, glaucoma can lead to permanent vision loss. Without treatment, it can cause total permanent blindness within a few years. Less common causes include a blunt or chemical injury to the eye, severe eye infection, blocked blood vessels inside the eye, and inflammatory conditions.

Who is at risk?

While everyone at any age is at risk for glaucoma, certain groups are at a higher risk than others. These include African Americans, Hispanics and Asians, as well as all people over the age of 60. People with diabetes, a family history of glaucoma and those who use steroids (such as inhalers used for asthma) are also at increased risk. Injury to the eye may also lead to glaucoma; these injuries are usually sports-related and most often occur in baseball and boxing.

What are the Symptoms?

Because there are typically no symptoms of glaucoma, it is known as the "sneak thief of sight." Usually no pain is associated with increased eye pressure. Vision loss begins with peripheral or side vision. The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is to get tested. See your eye doctor annually. As diagnosing glaucoma is not always easy, there are a variety of tests that can be performed. If you have glaucoma, treatment can begin immediately.

What are the options for treatment?

Glaucoma must be monitored for life. It is not curable and vision loss cannot be regained. With medication and/or surgery, it is possible to halt further loss of vision. Treatment can include medications, such as eye drops and pills to help control the pressure of the inner eye, and surgical procedures, which vary from laser to traditional.

Diagnosis is the first step to preserving your vision. If you're due for a checkup, please make an appointment with your eye doctor today!

