

Glaucoma: Symptoms and Treatment

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve, usually due to high fluid pressure inside the eye. The most common type shows no early signs, while a sudden blockage and rise of intraocular pressure (IOP) is a medical emergency. Treatment focuses on lowering eye pressure (IOP) to save remaining sight.

Common Symptoms

Open-angle glaucoma (most common)

No early signs.

Slow loss of side (peripheral) vision, more so in dim light.

Frequent change of spectacle number is another common complaint.

Later on, central vision loss or total blindness.

Angle-closure attack (medical emergency)

Severe eye or head pain, sudden blurry vision, rainbow-coloured halos around lights, red eyes, and vomiting.

The headache and vomiting may be so severe that the patient often gets admitted for medical evaluation with a physician rather than an eye surgeon.

Tests

How glaucoma is assessed

Perimetry: Checks and measures side (peripheral) vision.

OCT: Checks the health of the optic nerve.

Gonioscopy: Checks the angle of the anterior chamber, to determine whether it is a narrow or open angle.

Main Treatments

Lowering and controlling eye pressure

Eye drops: Daily prescription drops to lower fluid buildup or improve drainage. These drops have to be used regularly, with regular IOP checks.

Laser therapy: In-office laser procedures to fix the eye's drainage system.

Surgery: Operations like a trabeculectomy or tiny tube implants to create new fluid pathways.

Success Rate

Timely and monitored treatment prevents blindness and improves quality of life.