

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 (intraocular pressure, or IOP). The most common type shows no early signs, while a sudden blockage causing a rapid rise in IOP is a medical emergency. Treatment focuses on lowering eye pressure to save remaining sight.

Common Symptoms

Open-Angle Glaucoma (Most Common)

- No early signs
- Slow loss of side (peripheral) vision, especially in dim light
- Frequent changes in glasses prescription
- Later, loss of central vision or total blindness

Angle-Closure Attack — A Medical Emergency

- Severe eye pain or headache
- Sudden blurred vision
- Rainbow-coloured halos around lights
- Red eye
- Nausea and vomiting

The headache and vomiting can be so severe that patients are often admitted under a physician for a medical problem, rather than being seen by an eye surgeon.

Tests

- **Perimetry:** checks and measures side vision
- **OCT:** checks the health of the optic nerve
- **Gonioscopy:** examines the angle of the anterior chamber to see whether the drainage passage is narrow or open

Main Treatments

- **Eye drops:** Daily prescription drops that reduce fluid production or improve drainage.
- **Laser therapy:** In-office laser procedures to improve the eye's drainage system.
- **Surgery:** Operations such as trabeculectomy or tiny tube implants that create new pathways for fluid to drain.

Important

Eye drops must be used regularly, with regular IOP checks.

Outcome

Good News

Timely, well-monitored treatment prevents blindness and improves quality of life.