

GLAUCOMA FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that cause gradual destruction of the optic nerve. The optic nerve is the cable that connects the eye to the brain. Optic nerve damage causes shrinking of the visual field and, eventually, blindness.

Why is glaucoma such a serious eye condition?

It causes irreversible blindness. Unlike blindness caused by cataracts which can be reversed with cataract surgery, vision lost due to glaucoma is gone forever.

How big a problem is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the 2nd leading cause of irreversible blindness in the world. One study estimates that 60.5 million people worldwide have glaucoma with 8.4 million of them blind in both eyes.¹

In the Philippines, glaucoma is the 3rd leading cause of blindness in both eyes and is the leading cause of irreversible blindness of both eyes.²

Who are at risk for glaucoma?

Glaucoma can occur at any age but by far the most commonly affected are older individuals. Persons with the following risk factors have a higher chance of developing or having glaucoma:

- Elevated intraocular pressure (eye pressure)
- Family history of glaucoma
- Age over 45
- Previous eye injury
- Chronic steroid use
- Diabetes mellitus
- People of Chinese ancestry

These persons should have themselves screened for glaucoma by an ophthalmologist (EyeMD).

¹ Quigley H, Broman AT. British Journal of Ophthalmology. 2006.

² Cubilan LDP, Olivar-Santos E. Philippine Journal of Ophthalmology. 2005.

What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

Most cases of glaucoma have no symptoms or very subtle symptoms. Because the vision loss starts at the edges of the visual field (peripheral vision) and occurs gradually, many glaucoma sufferers do not realize that there is a problem until they have lost a large area of their vision.

A small percentage of cases of glaucoma have episodes of eye pain, blurred vision, redness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and seeing rainbows around lights.

How is glaucoma diagnosed?

An ophthalmologist examines the optic nerve and the drainage pathways of the eye and measures eye pressure. Tests to measure the field of vision and analyze the optic nerve are also used.

Can glaucoma be cured?

No, glaucoma cannot be cured. Damage to the optic nerve caused by glaucoma is permanent. Glaucoma can be controlled, especially when discovered early. In certain cases, the risk of developing glaucoma can be greatly minimized by particular types of prophylactic treatment.

How is glaucoma treated?

Depending on the type and stage of glaucoma it can be treated with eyedrops, laser or surgery. Since there is no cure for glaucoma, lifelong monitoring of the condition is needed.



This is a public service of the
**Philippine Glaucoma Foundation &
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