

## GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which it is thought the internal pressure of your eye rises to a point that the optic nerve is damaged. The exact cause of glaucoma is not known. The pressure can build either due to a problem in the production, flow or drainage of fluid normally produced in your eye. When the pressure rises, the fibers and blood vessels in the optic nerve can easily be damaged. The optic nerve carries visual information to the brain. As these fibers are damaged, the amount and quality of information sent to the brain decreases and a loss of vision occurs.

Glaucoma most frequently occurs in individuals over the age of 40 and there is a hereditary tendency for the development of the disease in some families. Primary open-angle glaucoma causes damage at an earlier age and leads to blindness at a much greater rate. There is also a greater risk of developing glaucoma when you have diabetes, high blood pressure and eye injuries. Regular optometric examinations are important for all ages to assess your risk for glaucoma.

Because most types of glaucoma open-angle glaucoma often develops painlessly and gradually, there are no early warning signs. It can gradually destroy your vision without you knowing it. A comprehensive ocular health examination is often the only way to detect glaucoma. During an eye examination the pressure in the eye is measured. Your optometrist will also look at the health of the optic nerve and measure your field of vision.

If diagnosed at an early stage, glaucoma can be controlled and little or no further vision loss should occur. If left untreated, side awareness (peripheral vision) and central vision will be destroyed and almost complete blindness may occur. Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness in Canada.

Treatment via eye drops and surgery is usually effective in maintaining your remaining vision. Once vision is lost due to glaucoma, it cannot be restored. This is why regular preventive eye exams are so important.