

Glaucoma in Children

This material will help you understand glaucoma and how it is treated.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that lead to damage the optic nerve. This is usually because of increased pressure inside the eye. In most cases, the increase in pressure happens because fluid cannot drain efficiently from the eye.

Glaucoma can develop at any age, but it is most common among older people. It is relatively rare in children. Children often have different signs and symptoms of the disease than adults.

What are the types of glaucoma?

Glaucoma in children is classified by the age that symptoms begin.

Congenital- present at birth.

Infantile- develops between 1-24 months of age.

Juvenile- develops after the age of 3.

What are signs and symptoms of glaucoma?

The most common symptoms in children with congenital or infantile glaucoma include excessive tearing, sensitivity to light, and a cloudy cornea (the front surface of the eye which is normally clear). Glaucomatous eyes may appear to be large or bulged and the longer shape of the eye may lead to nearsightedness.

Children with juvenile glaucoma often do not have any obvious symptoms.

During an eye exam, the eye doctor can detect high pressure and may see signs of optic nerve damage such as cupping. This means that the center of the nerve is larger than normal.

What causes glaucoma?

Some types of childhood glaucoma are genetic or inherited. But, in most cases, the cause of glaucoma is unknown. When there is no known cause, this is called primary glaucoma. When glaucoma is caused by or associated with other diseases, it is called secondary glaucoma. Diseases and conditions that are associated with secondary glaucoma include:

- Axenfeld-Reiger Syndrome
- Aniridia
- Sturge-Weber Syndrome
- Neurofibromatosis
- Trauma or surgery (especially after cataract surgery in children)
- Steroid use

How is glaucoma treated?

Treating your child's glaucoma early is very important and can prevent permanent vision loss. Treatment involves lowering the eye pressure by medication and/or surgery. Your child's eye doctor may prescribe one or more types of eye drops or oral medication. This may be the main treatment for children with juvenile or secondary glaucoma. Medications may also be used to control eye pressure until surgery. Medications may also be used for any disease still present after surgery. Surgical treatment is often recommended, especially in congenital glaucoma. Surgery can open drainage canals or create routes for fluid to drain from the eyes.

Aside from lowering the eye pressure, many children with glaucoma need treatment for associated eye conditions. Nearsightedness, amblyopia (lazy eye), and strabismus (crossing or wandering eyes) are all common among children with glaucoma and must be managed. Treatment for these conditions may include glasses, patching, or surgery.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



<http://www.aapos.org/terms/conditions/55>

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