

# Angle-Closure Glaucoma

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This material will help you understand the basics of glaucoma and how you can manage your angle-closure glaucoma.

## What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve. Glaucoma slowly causes the optic nerve to die over time. The optic nerve is the electric cable that sends images from the eye to the brain so we can see. Eye pressure can play a role in damaging the sensitive nerve fibers that make up the optic nerve. The amount of eye pressure that can cause nerve damage is different in each person. So someone with a lower eye pressure can still have nerve damage from glaucoma, it just means that their pressure is too high for their eye. If glaucoma is not treated, it will cause side vision loss. This vision loss is permanent.

In some cases, other diseases cause glaucoma. This is known as secondary glaucoma. Secondary glaucoma can occur due to things like eye injuries or advanced cases of diabetes.

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness, especially in older adults. Early detection and treatment by your eye doctor are the keys to preventing vision loss from glaucoma.

## What is angle-closure glaucoma?

Angle-closure glaucoma happens when the drain of the eye becomes blocked and the pressure rises inside the eye. The colored part of the eye, the iris, can be pushed forward inside the eye and close off the drainage angle. If this happens quickly, it is called *acute angle-closure glaucoma*. If acute angle-

closure glaucoma is not treated quickly by an eye doctor, you can lose vision. When the drainage angle of the eye slowly becomes blocked, the pressure builds up slowly over a longer period. This is called *chronic angle-closure glaucoma*. You can also lose vision from chronic angle-closure glaucoma if not treated by an eye doctor.

### **Do I have symptoms of glaucoma?**

Most glaucoma cases do not have noticeable symptoms, but acute angle closure glaucoma does have serious symptoms. Acute angle closure glaucoma can give you sudden vision loss, with or without a severe brow ache around your eye, nausea, or vomiting. If you have any of these symptoms, you need to go to the Emergency Room right away, as your eye pressure may be dangerously high.

### **How is angle-closure glaucoma treated?**

Your eye doctor will use a combination of medications to lower your high eye pressure. He/she will also recommend a laser treatment if you have acute angle closure glaucoma or may recommend it if you have chronic angle closure glaucoma. This laser creates an escape valve for the fluid that has built up in the eye. The laser makes a little hole in the iris, the colored part of the eye. The fluid building up behind the iris escapes. The pressure inside the eye comes down. (This is like what you would do if a house were flooding from the basement. You would punch a hole through an upstairs window to let the water escape.) You may also need to take long-term medications for glaucoma. You may even need surgery to prevent further damage from occurring. Your doctor will discuss which treatment option is best for you.

**For more information, scan the code with your smartphone or visit the website.**



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/glaucoma/index.cfm#closed>

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