

Glaucoma Suspect

This material will help you understand what it means to be a glaucoma suspect.

Why am I a glaucoma suspect?

You are a glaucoma suspect. This means you **do not have glaucoma** but your eye doctor thinks that your optic nerve may develop glaucoma as you age.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve. The **optic nerve** is like an electric cable that sends images from the eye to the brain so we can see. Glaucoma causes the optic nerve to slowly weaken over time.

Pressure in the eye can damage the sensitive nerve fibers that make up the optic nerve. However, people with “normal” eye pressure can also develop glaucoma. Often, you will not notice this damage is happening until after the damage impacts your vision. If your eye pressure is not treated, it will first cause side vision loss. This vision loss is permanent.

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

Why am I at risk for glaucoma?

Anyone can get glaucoma, but these factors increase your risk of developing glaucoma:

- Age (anyone over 60 years old is at higher risk)
- High eye pressure
- African or Mexican-American ancestry
- Thin cornea (the clear surface covering the front of the eye)
- Family history of glaucoma
- Nearsightedness (you can see objects near to you clearly, but objects farther away are blurry)
- Past injuries to the eyes
- Steroid use
- A history of severe anemia or going into shock

How will I know if I develop glaucoma?

You should get an eye exam every year if you are a glaucoma suspect or if you are over 65 years old. Regular eye exams are the best way to detect any damage to your optic nerve and treat it early on.

How can I prevent glaucoma?

You should talk to your doctor about preventive treatment or early treatment. This may lower your risk of developing severe glaucoma. The treatment to prevent glaucoma damage as you get older is to

lower the eye pressure. You may benefit from treatment even if your eye pressure starts out as “normal” because the pressure can still be too high for your particular optic nerve. However, many people who are glaucoma suspects may never need treatment. Ask your doctor if preventive or early treatment for glaucoma is right for you.

For more information, visit the website listed.

<https://www.glaucoma.org/glaucoma/round-up-the-usual-suspects.php>

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