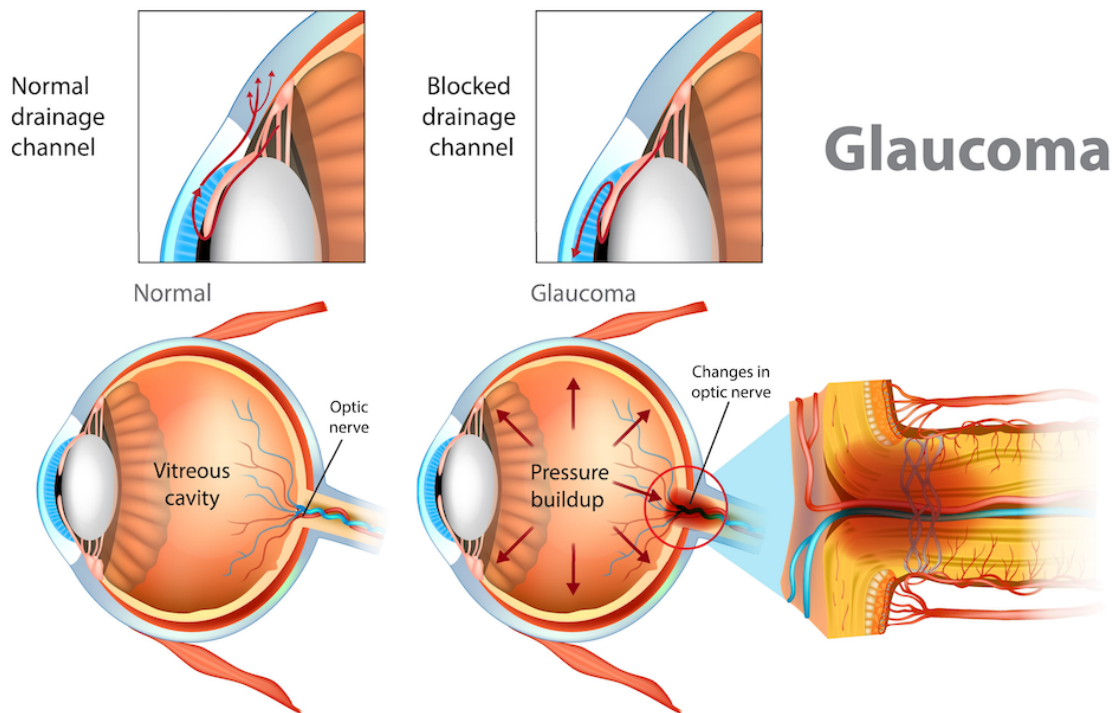


# Understanding Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye disease that can damage the nerve in the back of your eye. This nerve is called the optic nerve. It sends signals from your eye to your brain so you can see.

Glaucoma often happens when fluid builds up in the eye. This raises pressure inside the eye and can slowly cause vision loss.

A person may not notice the early vision changes. By the time they do, the disease may be advanced. That is why it is important to have regular eye exams. A complete eye exam can detect glaucoma early, and treatment can slow down or prevent more damage.



## Why Does Glaucoma Happen?

Usually, glaucoma happens when fluid pressure inside the eye gets too high. Less commonly, glaucoma can be caused by:

- Eye injuries
- Certain medicines

- Other eye conditions
- Family history

## **Types of Glaucoma**

### **Open-Angle Glaucoma**

This is the most common type of glaucoma, making up about 90% of cases in the United States.

The eye constantly makes fluid. In a healthy eye, the fluid drains out through a small space in the eye called the drainage angle. If the fluid cannot drain properly, it builds up. Pressure rises inside the eye and slowly damages the optic nerve.

### **Angle-Closure Glaucoma**

In this type, the drainage angle gets blocked completely. It is an emergency. If not treated, it can cause permanent vision loss within hours.

Symptoms may include severe eye pain, headache, nausea, blurred vision, and seeing halos around lights.

### **Normal-Pressure Glaucoma**

In this type, the optic nerve is damaged even though eye pressure is not high.

The exact cause is not known. It may be linked to poor blood flow to the optic nerve.

### **Secondary Glaucoma**

This type is due to another eye problem or disease, such as an eye injury, inflammation, diabetes, or certain medicines like steroids.

### **Congenital Glaucoma**

This rare type is present at birth or develops in early childhood. It happens when the drainage system does not develop correctly.

## **Who Is at Risk?**

You may be at higher risk for glaucoma if you:

- Are over age 60

- Are Black, Hispanic, or Asian
- Have family members with glaucoma
- Have diabetes or high blood pressure
- Use steroid medicines for a long time
- Have had an eye injury or surgery

## Possible Complications

If glaucoma is not treated, it can cause:

- Permanent vision loss
- Tunnel vision
- Blindness

Glaucoma damage cannot be reversed, but early treatment can help slow or stop the damage.

## Treatments

Glaucoma cannot be cured, but treatment helps protect your eyesight.

Treatment options include:

- **Eye drops:** These help lower pressure in the eye.
- **Oral medicines:** Sometimes, these are used with drops.
- **Laser therapy:** This helps the fluid drain better.
- **Surgery:** If necessary, surgery can create a new drainage route.

## Prevention Tips

- Get regular eye exams. Early signs of glaucoma often go unnoticed.
- Take all eye medicines as prescribed.
- Tell your care team if your vision changes.

- Protect your eyes from injury.
- Keep other health problems, like diabetes and high blood pressure, managed.



Glaucoma often has no symptoms until damage is advanced. Regular eye exams can find glaucoma early.

## Questions for Your Care Team

- How often should I have eye exams?
- How will I know if my vision is getting worse?

Contact your care team with any questions or concerns. We want you to feel confident in managing your health.

## When to Contact Your Care Team

Call your care team if you:

- Have gradual loss of side vision, or you notice blind spots in your vision
- Have blurred or hazy vision that does not go away
- Have frequent headaches, especially around your eyes
- See halos or rainbow-colored rings around lights, especially at night



- Have eye discomfort, pain, or redness that is new or does not improve
- Have any questions or concerns about your vision or glaucoma medicines

## **When to Call 911 or Go to the Emergency Room**

Get help right away if you:

- Have sudden, severe eye pain
- Have a sudden loss of vision or a severe blurring of vision in one or both eyes
- Have nausea or vomiting along with eye pain or vision changes
- Have a red eye with extreme pain or sudden swelling
- See halos or colored rings around lights with sudden vision loss or pain
- Have a severe headache with eye pain and vision changes

## **Thank You for Choosing Us**

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We are here to support you and want you to feel your best. Contact us with any questions.

**IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.**

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

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