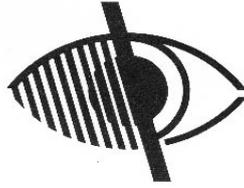


The Partially Sighted Society



GLAUCOMA

I have been told I have Glaucoma. What does that mean?

Glaucoma is a condition that occurs when there is a build of pressure in the eye. The onset of glaucoma is generally slow and painless. Many people don't realise they have glaucoma until they begin to notice a deterioration in their sideways (peripheral) vision. The effect of glaucoma on the sight is often described as 'tunnel vision.' This means that although the sufferer will still be able to read and see detail, the field of view becomes smaller and they begin bumping into things or tripping down kerbs or steps because they do not see them.

But what causes Glaucoma?

The eye is shaped like a ball. A ball keeps its shape because it is filled with air. In order for the eye to keep its shape the eye cavity is filled with fluid called aqueous fluid. This fluid is drained and refreshed through drainage channels between the lens and the cornea (front of the eye) to the white of the eye. It is this free-flow of fluid that maintains the pressure in the eye cavity.

A person develops glaucoma when these channels become narrow and the aqueous fluid is unable to drain properly. This then causes a build of pressure in the eye cavity. This increase of pressure begins to affect and damage the light-sensitive rod cells on the retina and eventually damages the optic nerve. It is at this stage that the person with glaucoma will begin to notice deterioration in their vision.

If glaucoma is left untreated the build-up of pressure will damage the optic nerve and lead to blindness.

Is there any treatment for Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is very easily diagnosed and a glaucoma test is part of the routine eye test. It is therefore important for everybody to have their eyes tested annually.

Treatment for glaucoma is available in the form of eye drops of medication. In some cases an operation is advised to 'open' the drainage channels to allow the aqueous fluid to flow freely again. Your GP or eye specialist will advise you about the treatment best suited to you.

Being diagnosed with any type of eye condition is distressing. At the Partially Sighted Society we have trained professionals on hand to offer help, support, advice and training in the use of visual and non-visual aids which making living with a condition such as Glaucoma easier.

For more information contact the Partially Sighted Society.

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