

Glaucoma

[Glaucoma](#) describes a group of eye disorders that damage the [optic nerve](#), which is an essential part of the eye for transmitting visual information to the brain. Elevated internal eye pressure due to fluid buildup is one of the leading risk factors for glaucoma, but glaucoma can occur without increased eye pressure. There are several different types of glaucoma, but the 2 main types are open-angle and angle-closure glaucoma. **Left untreated, glaucoma can lead to blindness.**

67% of individuals with glaucoma in the United States are women⁴

Individuals may have a higher risk for glaucoma with:

- Family history of glaucoma
- Farsightedness or nearsightedness
- Elevated eye pressure
- High blood pressure Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Sickle cell disease
- Thin corneas
- Eye injury or surgery
- Long-term corticosteroid use

Common Symptoms

Most individuals with glaucoma will not experience any symptoms until the late stages of disease. Each type of glaucoma presents with a different variation of symptoms, but some individuals with angle-closure glaucoma may experience:

- Eye pain or pressure
- Headache
- Rainbow-colored halos around light
- Low vision, blurred vision, narrowed (tunnel) vision, or blind spots
- Red eyes
- Nausea or vomiting

If you have sudden and severe onset of symptoms, it could be **acute angle-closure glaucoma**. While this condition is relatively rare, it is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment, so do not wait to see your eye doctor.



In the United States, Black Americans age 40 and older have the highest risk of developing glaucoma, with 6% having glaucoma by age 69 and 12% having glaucoma after age 80.⁴

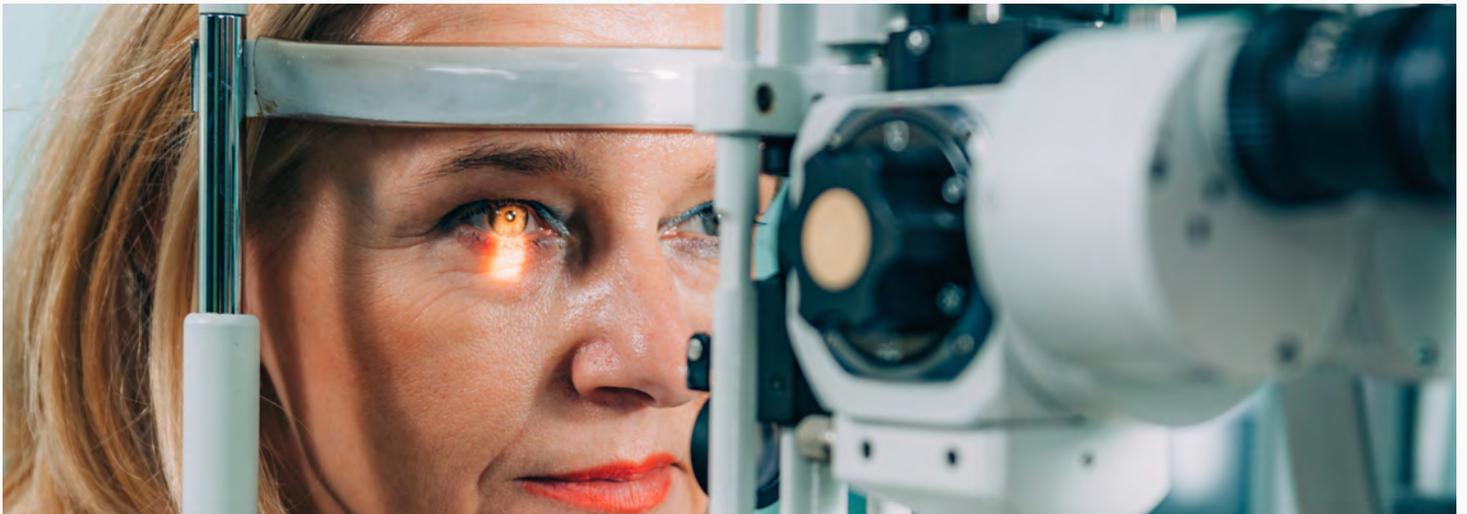
Diagnosing Glaucoma

Your eye doctor will be able to detect signs of glaucoma through a [comprehensive eye exam](#). Routine tests during this exam will measure the clarity of your vision, peripheral (side) vision, eye pressure, and other potential changes to the eye that may indicate glaucoma. Evaluating eye pressure and examining the optic nerve during the eye exam are important for identifying early signs of glaucoma.

Treatment Options

It is critical to catch this disease early because treatments for glaucoma cannot undo damage that has already occurred in the eye. However, once diagnosed, continued treatment regimens may help slow disease progression and prevent vision loss. Treatments may include:

- **Prescription eye drops** (e.g., prostaglandins, beta blockers, alpha-adrenergic agonists, carbonic anhydrase inhibitors, rho kinase inhibitors, and miotic or cholinergic agents) to reduce eye pressure
- **Laser trabeculoplasty** uses a small laser to open the drainage pathway in the eye, reducing fluid buildup and lowering inner eye pressure
- **Eye surgery**, depending on the type of glaucoma:
 - Trabeculectomy opens up the [sclera](#) (the white of the eye) and creates a pathway for fluid drainage
 - Tube shunt inserts a small tube into the eye to improve fluid drainage
 - Minimally invasive glaucoma surgeries (MIGS) typically involve using microscopic equipment and tiny incisions to help lower inner eye pressure



Maintaining overall health and keeping up with your regularly scheduled eye appointments are important because most people do not know they have glaucoma until the very late stages of disease when damage has already become significant. See the [Wellness Tips for Eye Health](#) of the SWHR Guide to Women's Eye Health for tips on staying well and managing your risk of eye disease.