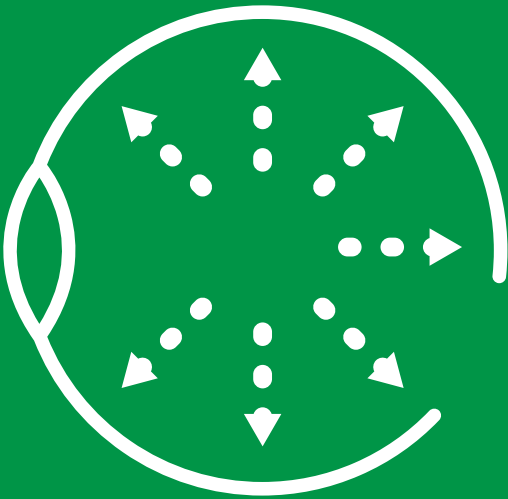


GENERAL INFORMATION

# GLAUCOMA



vision  
eye institute

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# WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

**Glaucoma is commonly known as the ‘sneak thief of sight’ because it can cause irreversible vision loss without any obvious symptoms.**

The term glaucoma refers to a group of conditions that lead to eye (optic) nerve damage. This nerve transmits signals from the eye to the brain to produce the image that we see. When a significant part of the nerve is damaged, your side (peripheral) field of vision is lost – this vision loss gradually extends towards your central vision, until eventually all sight is lost. Vision loss caused by glaucoma is permanent.

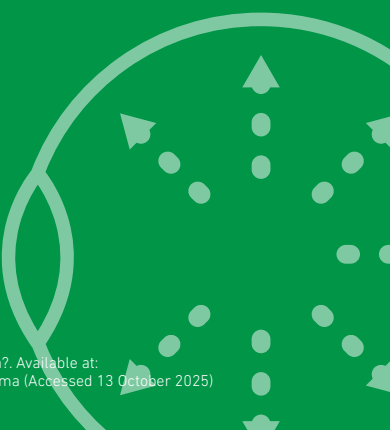
Most cases of glaucoma are due to increased pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure), either from the drainage angle that allows outflow of fluids from the eye being closed (angle-closure glaucoma) or the drainage angle being open but damaged (open-angle glaucoma).

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**UP TO 50% OF ALL PEOPLE WITH GLAUCOMA IN AUSTRALIA ARE NOT AWARE THEY HAVE THE CONDITION.<sup>1</sup> HOWEVER, IF IT IS DIAGNOSED EARLY, TREATMENT CAN BEGIN AND VISION LOSS CAN BE PREVENTED.**

## REFERENCES

1. Glaucoma Australia. What is glaucoma?. Available at: <https://glaucoma.org.au/what-is-glaucoma> (Accessed 13 October 2025)





## What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

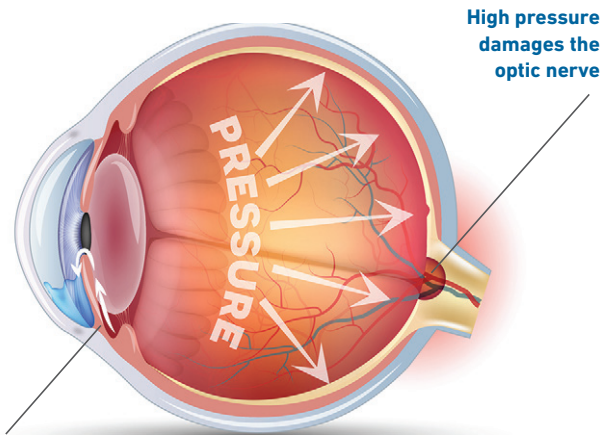
Most cases of glaucoma are asymptomatic – there is no pain and vision seems quite normal. When symptoms do occur, they include:

- Loss of side (peripheral) vision that gradually creeps towards central vision
- Blurred vision
- Difficulty adjusting to low-light conditions.

In acute angle-closure glaucoma, the drainage angle suddenly and completely closes up, causing the pressure inside the eye to rise very quickly. Symptoms for this type of glaucoma include:

- Sudden onset of eye pain
- Sudden vision loss
- Headache, nausea or vomiting.

This is a medical emergency and you should contact your ophthalmologist immediately or visit the nearest emergency department.



**Drainage canal blocked**  
too much fluid stays in the eye, which increases pressure

## How is glaucoma diagnosed?

A number of tests are carried out to diagnose glaucoma, including:

- Visual acuity (clarity) test using an eye chart
- Visual field test to determine peripheral vision
- An examination that involves using drops to dilate the pupils of the eye
- Tonometry to measure eye pressure
- Pachymetry to measure corneal thickness
- Gonioscopy to see if there is a blockage where the fluid normally drains out of the eye, and to distinguish between open-angle and closed-angle glaucoma
- Optical coherence tomography (OCT) to scan the optic nerve head to aid diagnosis and monitoring.

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# HOW IS GLAUCOMA TREATED?

Unfortunately, there is no cure for glaucoma. But there are a number of treatment options available to help reduce eye pressure and minimise or prevent further vision loss. Sometimes, a combination of treatments may be used.

## MEDICATION

Eye drops are very effective in controlling eye pressure for most people with glaucoma.

## LASER SURGERY

Laser treatment for glaucoma is performed in the clinic and does not require admission to a day surgery. Anaesthetic eye drops are used to numb the eye so there is little or no discomfort. There are two types of laser treatment for glaucoma – selective laser trabeculoplasty and YAG laser peripheral iridotomy.



- **Selective laser trabeculoplasty (SLT)** uses laser pulses directed at the drainage outflow channels to stimulate the cells to clear away the debris and improve outflow.
- **YAG laser peripheral iridotomy** is used in angle-closure glaucoma to create a channel in the iris (coloured part of your eye), which opens up the drainage angle and prevents progression of the disease.

## SURGERY

Surgery is used for patients whose glaucoma continues to progress despite medication and laser treatment.

- **Minimally invasive glaucoma surgery or MIGS** are relatively new procedures where a tiny stent is inserted through a very small incision (similar to keyhole surgery). MIGS procedures have an excellent safety profile and quick recovery time. They are often performed alongside cataract surgery and are generally most effective for mild-to-moderate glaucoma. The MIGS device can be placed into the eye's natural drainage canal (e.g. iStent, Hydrus, iTrack) or behind the eye's drainage system (e.g. MINiject), helping fluid drain more easily and lowering eye pressure.
- **Minimally invasive Bleb surgery or MEBS** (e.g. XEN or Preserflo) are implants that divert fluid into a 'bleb' or lake of fluid. They are less invasive and have a faster recovery time than traditional filtration surgery. Their long-term effectiveness is still under evaluation.
- **Glaucoma filtration surgery** (trabeculectomy) is the 'traditional' surgery for glaucoma, having been used for many decades. A tunnel is created so fluid can bypass the outflow obstruction and drain out of the eye into a 'bleb'. An anti-scarring agent is used to prevent closure of the new pathway. Trabeculectomy surgery is very effective but has a slow recovery. It is used for moderate to advanced glaucoma.
- **Glaucoma drainage devices** (Baerveldt, PAUL or Molteno) are relatively large drainage devices that are used to control eye pressure. The implant has a small tube that diverts fluid to a plate that sits underneath the top eyelid. It is usually reserved for advanced cases where a trabeculectomy is not suitable or has failed.

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Vision Eye Institute is the largest private provider of ophthalmic services in Australia. Our team of highly regarded doctors includes general ophthalmologists as well as those who specialise in specific areas/conditions of the eye.

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CATARACT & LENS SURGERY



GLAUCOMA



DIABETIC EYE DISEASE



MACULAR DEGENERATION



RETINAL CONDITIONS



KERATOCONUS



DRY EYE



PTERYGIUM



CORNEAL TRANSPLANTATION



CORNEAL CONDITIONS



NERVE-RELATED VISION PROBLEMS



RECONSTRUCTIVE EYE SURGERY



CHILDREN'S EYE HEALTH



GENERAL EYE HEALTH



## OUR GLAUCOMA CLINICS

For more information or to find a Vision Eye Institute clinic that treats glaucoma, visit:

[visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/glaucoma/](http://visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/glaucoma/)

This information is general in nature. All medical and surgical procedures have potential benefits and risks. Consult your ophthalmologist for specific medical advice.



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