Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye’s optic nerve and can result in vision loss and blindness. It is estimated that 60.5 million people suffer from Glaucoma across the world and 4.5 million of these sufferers are blind as a result of Glaucoma. However, with early detection and treatment, you can often protect your eyes against serious vision loss.

The optic nerve is made up of over 1 million nerve fibres which connect the retina to the brain. The optic nerve is important for sight because it is the pathway that transmits signals from your retina – the light sensitive tissue at the back of your eye – to your brain. In essence, your optic nerve allows you to ‘see’ and, therefore, a healthy optic nerve is necessary for good vision.

Glaucoma is usually caused by a build-up of fluid inside your eye which, in turn, causes increased pressure inside the eye.

The inside front of your eye is filled with a fluid called the aqueous humour. This fluid helps to keep your eye healthy by nourishing nearby tissues. It is, however, important that this fluid drains away at the same rate at which its produced – if it does not, your eye pressure will increase and subsequently cause damage to the back of your eye. This is what is known as Glaucoma.

There are 5 main types of Glaucoma:

- **Primary Open Angle Glaucoma**
  caused by high eye pressure over a long period of time.

- **Closed Angle Glaucoma**
  caused by a quick sudden rise in eye pressure.

- **Normal Tension Glaucoma**
  caused by low eye pressure over a long period of time.

- **Secondary Glaucoma**
  caused as a result of another eye condition or injury to the eye.

- **Congenital Glaucoma**
  when a baby is born with glaucoma.
The following factors can increase your risk of developing Glaucoma:

- **Age**
  glaucoma is more likely the older you get and is most likely to affect people over the age of 60.

- **Ethnic Background**
  people of African, Caribbean or East Asian descent are at a greater risk of developing glaucoma.

- **Family History**
  people with a close relative are more likely to develop glaucoma.

- **Medical Conditions**
  conditions such as short or long sightedness and diabetes can also increase your risk of glaucoma.

In most instances Glaucoma has **no symptoms** and causes no initial pain. It can develop in one eye or in both simultaneously, or individually. **Vision often remains stable** until late in the disease and by this time the glaucoma becomes irreversible.

Symptoms of Glaucoma can include:

- **Misty or blurred vision**
- **Rainbow coloured circles around bright lights**
- **Nausea**
- **Severe eye and head pain**
- **Narrowing of vision**
- **Sudden loss of sight**

Glaucoma can be detected through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. In many circumstances Glaucoma is non-curable and, therefore, it is very important to be diagnosed early so that progression of the disease can be halted.

There are several treatments available for Glaucoma, including medicines in the form of eye drops of pills, laser treatment or surgery. Though these treatments can save remaining vision, they will **not restore lost vision** as a result of Glaucoma. As a worst-case scenario, Glaucoma can lead to blindness however this is unlikely providing you are **diagnosed early** enough and follow the appropriate remedial procedures.

It is essential that you have your eyes tested **every 2 years, as a minimum.** This will help to pick up any eye conditions or diseases including Glaucoma.

Contact SEE today to organise your eye examination.

Click [here](http://www.nhs.uk) to find out more about Glaucoma ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))