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Glaucoma

Types

There are two common types of glaucoma: acute and chronic.

Acute glaucoma - mild attacks cause pain in the eyes and haloes around lights. These symptoms are relieved by sleeping. Full-blown attacks cause rapid deterioration of vision, intense eye pain, redness and watering of the eye, sensitivity to bright light, haloes around lights, nausea and vomiting. Acute glaucoma is more common in women than in men.

Chronic glaucoma - often causes no symptoms until permanent damage has already occurred. Symptoms may then include loss of peripheral vision and, eventually, blurring of objects directly in front of the person.

There are also two rarer types of glaucoma: congenital glaucoma and glaucoma that's secondary to conditions such as uveitis or a side effect of medication.

Glaucoma mainly affects people over the age of 60 and is more common with increasing age.

Treatment

Untreated glaucoma can lead to blindness. Eye drops or tablets may be prescribed to reduce fluid production and consequently reduce pressure in the eye.

Laser or surgical treatment may be used when medical treatment isn't sufficiently effective.

Screening

People over the age of 40 are advised to have their eyes tested every two years to check for signs of glaucoma. If glaucoma is identified early enough, treatment can be given to prevent further damage and reduce the risk of blindness.

These tests are available at your local optician and should include:

examination of the optic disc measurement of the pressure in the eye checking of peripheral vision (by looking for a sequence of spots of light on a screen).

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