

What is a glaucoma suspect?

Glaucoma is a painless, asymptomatic and insidious condition. It has been named “the silent thief of sight”. 3 million Americans have glaucoma. Unfortunately, of these 3 million people who have glaucoma, half of them are unaware that they have the disease. A person does not realize their vision has been affected by glaucoma until serious, irreversible vision loss has occurred. Our goal here at the Family Eye Care Center is to prevent this from happening to any of our patients.

A glaucoma suspect is a person who during their comprehensive eye exam is found to have at **least one of the following conditions**:

- 1) Borderline elevated or definitely elevated intra-ocular pressure (the pressure within the eye) in one or both eyes. Elevated pressures can directly damage the optic nerve tissue in the back of the eye. The higher the pressure and the longer the pressure is elevated, the higher the chance one has of developing glaucoma.
- 2) Increased/large cupping of the optic nerve in the back of one or both eyes (increased “cup-to-disc ratio”). The “cup” of the optic nerve is the concavity or “scooped out” appearance seen in the center of the optic nerve. The larger the “cup”, the higher the chance of glaucoma.
- 3) A splinter-like hemorrhage seen either on or very close to the optic nerve upon examination
- 4) Strong family history of glaucoma
- 5) Borderline elevated or definitely elevated intra-ocular pressure secondary to steroid medication (eye drops or oral steroids)
- 6) Pseudo-exfoliation syndrome
- 7) Pigment dispersion syndrome
- 8) Very shallow anterior chamber of one or both eyes (narrow occludable angles)
- 9) Severe blunt trauma to one or both eyes

Should one or a combination of the above conditions be present, your eye doctor must then determine whether you actually have glaucoma or not. A series of tests are performed and these consist of:

- 1) Computerized visual field testing- This test checks the peripheral and central vision of each eye.
- 2) Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) - This test analyzes the tissue that comprises the optic nerve of each eye on a microscopic level. Essentially, this technology uses light to “biopsy” the extremely fine nerve fibers in the back of the eye that allows one to see.
- 3) Digital stereoscopic photographs of each optic nerve- This provides a permanent record of the appearance of the optic nerve of each eye for current analysis and future reference.
- 4) Gonioscopy- Your eye doctor directly looks at the internal drainage system of each eye using a special lens.
- 5) Pachymetry- The thickness of the cornea of each eye is measured using ultrasound.

The results of these tests will be analyzed and interpreted. Should there be strong or definite evidence of glaucoma then a patient will be treated with eye drops in order to help lower the intra-ocular pressure. This person will then be followed regularly to make certain the treatment is effective.

A person who is deemed a glaucoma suspect needs to have these tests performed every year along with a comprehensive eye exam. Closely monitoring each patient will ensure that if glaucoma does emerge then it will be promptly diagnosed and subsequently treated so that vision loss does not occur. A glaucoma suspect has a much higher chance of developing glaucoma than someone who is not a glaucoma suspect.

For more about glaucoma, please visit our website www.familyeyemd.com and look under the “Eye Conditions” section.