

Glaucoma Information – Ophthalmology Department, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn

Glaucoma is today's most common cause of preventable blindness in the UK and mainly affects people over the age of 40, those with diabetes or who are short-sighted and people of African-Caribbean origin.

Glaucoma is a condition caused by an unusual amount of fluid putting pressure on the optic nerve at the back of the eye. There is no real level at which the pressure must be before glaucoma develops, however some people will develop the condition at relatively low pressures, whilst other will experience high pressure for year and not develop the condition.

Glaucoma can lead to damage of the optic nerve, adversely affecting vision which will usually start around the edges (also known as the peripheral vision). It is also quite common for people with glaucoma to develop high pressure in their eye (ocular hypertension).

Testing for glaucoma is a standard part of most tests undertaken by your optician, and our own optometrist and ophthalmologists. The quicker that glaucoma can be diagnosed the better, since the chances of permanent damage are reduced significantly by early detection.

The principle treatment for glaucoma is the lessening of pressure through either medication or surgery. Medication takes the form of a variety of eye drops, which can have side affects and must be taken exactly as your doctor prescribes. Surgery can take the form of laser-based surgeries – particularly for older patients – or more traditional surgery. Medication is increasingly taking the place of surgery as it develops and becomes more and more effective.