

- Everyone, over the age of 40, should be tested for glaucoma EVERY 2 years

How is Glaucoma Treated?

Normally, glaucoma is treated simply by the use of eye drops which are put into the eye to control intraocular pressure and protect the optic nerve. The range of these medications is large and increasing. Recently Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) has become available as a treatment option for certain patients in place of eye drops. We have recently added this technology to our treatment options..

- Eye drops control intraocular pressure
- Eye drops protect the optic nerve

Sometimes, in spite of medical treatment, the condition can progress and an operation, called Trabeculectomy is required. In this operation, an alternative route for the flow of fluid from the eye is created. This procedure is not done commonly and is reserved for advanced cases where the visual field is failing.

In summary, glaucoma is a disease which affects people, mainly over forty, AND RUNS IN FAMILIES; the optic nerve becomes damaged and this causes progressive loss of visual field. People who have a family history of the disease are particularly vulnerable.

Everyone over forty should be tested for glaucoma every 2 years.

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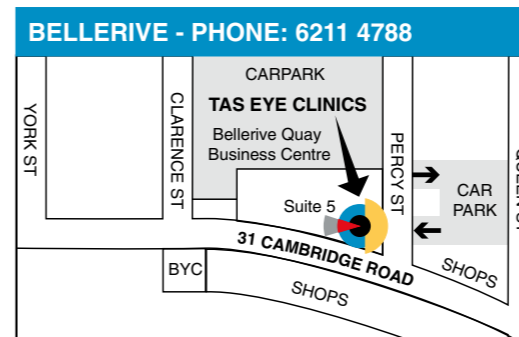
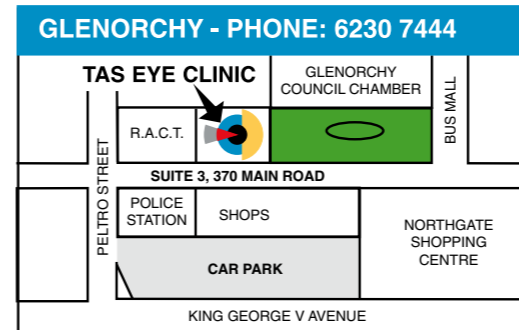
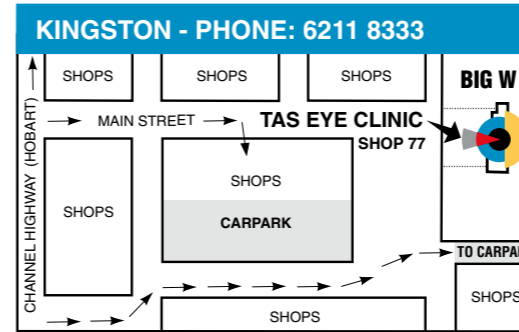
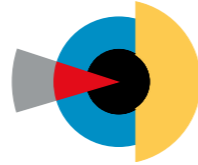
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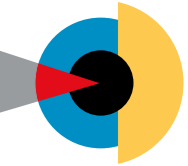
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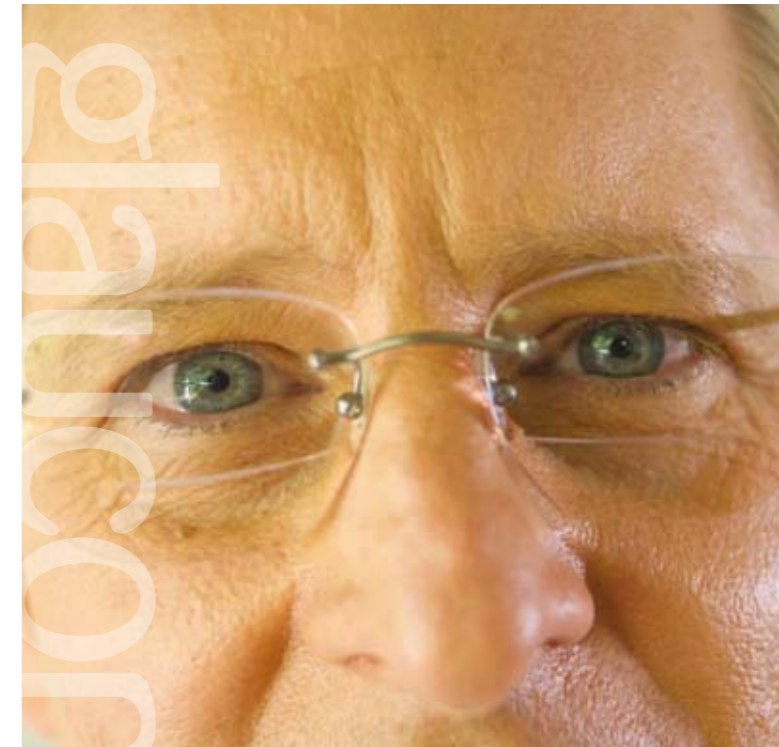


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Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye disease that affects people's field of vision. It mainly affects the over forty age group and tends to occur in families. The most common form of glaucoma is chronic simple glaucoma. There are rarer forms, such as congenital glaucoma and angle closure glaucoma, which are not discussed in this general leaflet.

Glaucoma is a common disease and affects approximately 2% of the community over the age of forty. Approximately half of people with glaucoma have a near relative (a mother, brother, aunt, etc) with the disease.

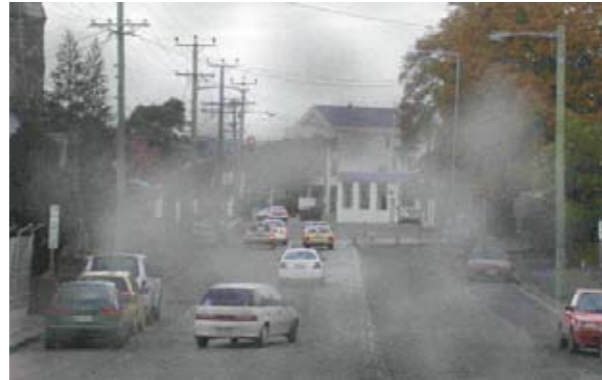
- **Glaucoma is a common disease**
- **Glaucoma affects approximately 2% of the community**

Glaucoma is basically a disease of the optic nerve which, as far as the person who has it is concerned, causes a dimming of certain areas of the field of vision. There is an associated rise, in 75% of people with glaucoma, of pressure inside the eye. It is important to understand that the 25% of people have no rise in intraocular pressure and yet still have glaucoma.

The disease starts with a gradual dimming of certain areas of the visual field, approximately fifteen degrees from the central fixation. Because the process is gradual, the person may not be aware of the dimming until it is quite



Picture 1 - Normal View



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

advanced. This is best exemplified by looking at the following four diagrams. The picture of a busy road intersection shows, in sequence, the areas which are gradually lost as the disease progresses. Unfortunately, because this process is gradual, people with glaucoma often do not notice this loss until it has progressed to a fairly advanced stage. This advanced stage is represented in picture 4.

Glaucoma may be picked up by routine measurement of intraocular pressure by an eye care professional, (Ophthalmologist or Optometrist). However, the intraocular pressure is only raised in 75% of cases so measuring intraocular pressure cannot be relied upon to diagnose or exclude the disease. There are other methods of determining whether a person has glaucoma, such as examining the optic nerve and assessing the visual field. All three factors have to be taken into consideration in the early diagnosis of

the disease.

- **Intraocular pressure measurement cannot be relied upon to either diagnose or exclude the disease.**

Glaucoma is very much a disease which, if detected early, can be treated. No matter how good the treatment, vision that has been lost cannot be recovered. Visual acuity, i.e. the ability to read a chart, a book, or see TV or read a newspaper, is only affected late in the condition. The paradox of glaucoma is that a person may well be able to read the bottom line on the Eye chart, or the smallest of print, yet may be totally unsafe to drive a vehicle because of loss of visual field.

How is Glaucoma Diagnosed?

The disease may be picked up in routine examination if the intraocular pressure is raised, or if the optic disc appears to have early changes. Patients with a near relative with glaucoma are advised to be checked regularly as the early changes of the disease are extremely subtle. Only an Ophthalmologist (medically qualified Eye Specialist) can diagnose that a patient really has glaucoma and requires treatment. Therefore, all patients in whom there is a suspicion of the disease should be seen by an Ophthalmologist for both confirmation of the disease and for treatment. Your GP or Optometrist can refer you to an Ophthalmologist.