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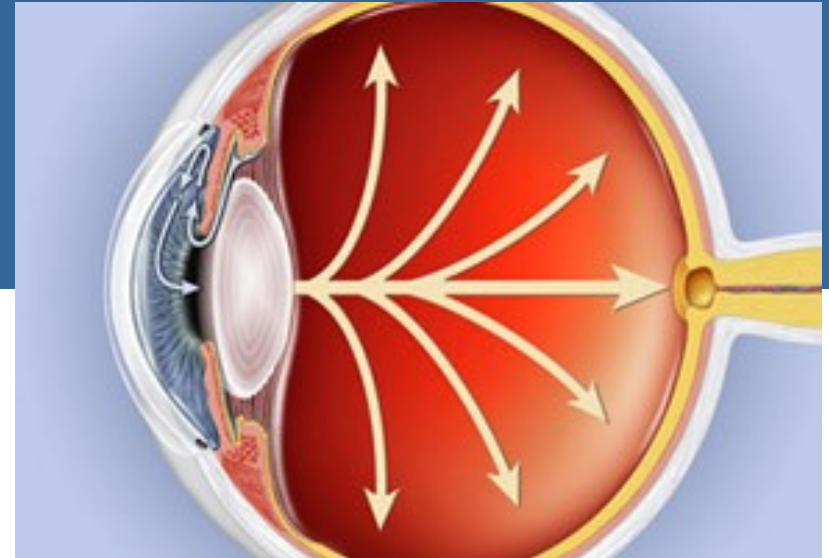
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## Glaucoma



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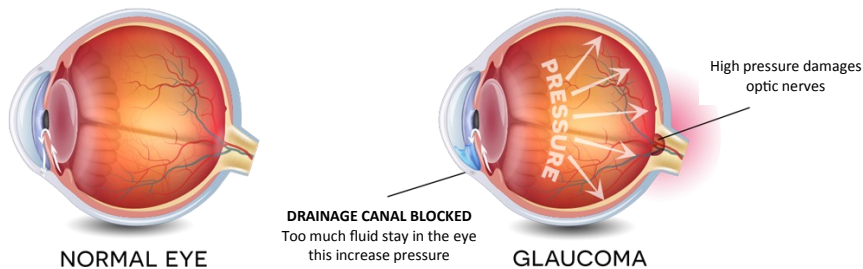
*St. Maarten Medical Center*

## Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a complex disease in which damage to the optic nerve leads to progressive, irreversible vision loss.

Glaucoma is the name of a group of diseases characterized by a combination of:

- ◆ Too high an eye pressure;
- ◆ Characteristic changes to the head of the optic nerve;
- ◆ Visual field failure.



### What Causes Glaucoma?

Fluid pressure increases in the eye when the eye's fluid (called aqueous humor) does not drain properly. This pressure reduces the blood supply to the optic nerve and causes the death of nerve cells. As these cells die, blind spots develop. Without treatment, glaucoma can eventually lead to blindness.

### Types of Glaucoma

#### Open-angle glaucoma

Open-angle (chronic) glaucoma is the most common type of glaucoma. It occurs when the fluid channels in the wall of the eye gradually narrow with time.

#### Close or closed-angle glaucoma

Closed-angle (acute) glaucoma occurs when the iris slips forward and closes off the exit of the aqueous humor. This type is more common amongst farsighted people.

### Other types of glaucoma

In addition to open-angle glaucoma and closed-angle glaucoma, there are many other causes for too high an eye pressure, such as an eye accident, eye surgery, certain medication use or some birth defects.

### What are the Symptoms of Glaucoma?

- ◆ Blurred Vision
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Seeing Halos Around Lights
- ◆ Severe Eye Pain
- ◆ Nausea / Vomiting

### How is Glaucoma Detected?

Regular eye examinations by your ophthalmologist are the best way to detect glaucoma. Your ophthalmologist will measure your intraocular pressure, inspect the drainage angle of your eye, evaluate whether there is any optic nerve damage, and test the peripheral vision of each eye.



### How is Glaucoma Treated?

Damage caused by glaucoma usually cannot be reversed.

Eye drops, laser surgery, and operating room surgery can be used to help prevent further damage. Oral medication may also be prescribed.

### How can Glaucoma be Prevented?

There is no real prevention for glaucoma. Early detection, however, may prevent further vision loss and blindness. Anyone older than 35 should have an eye examination at least every 2 years.