

*Columbus Ophthalmology Associates*  
**OPEN ANGLE GLAUCOMA**

**What is glaucoma?**

The eye is filled with a clear fluid called the aqueous that nourishes the front of the eye. This fluid flows through the pupil and is absorbed by tiny drainage canals near the peripheral part of the iris.

Intraocular pressure depends on the production of aqueous and how effectively it is absorbed through the drainage system. This pressure normally runs between 10 and 20mm Hg. Glaucoma occurs when the fluid pressure increases enough to damage the delicate optic nerve. This nerve connects the eye to the brain where visual images are interpreted.

**What are the symptoms and how is it treated?**

Open angle glaucoma is the most common form of the disease. There are no warning signs and the rise in the pressure is very gradual. It is a life long condition and cannot be cured, but usually responds well to eye drops. Laser treatment and sometimes microsurgery also are useful in controlling eye pressure over a patient's lifetime.

**Why is early detection important?**

Glaucoma is insidious as early damage in open angle glaucoma does not affect central vision. Certain parts of the peripheral vision are involved first and are often detected during special testing called perimetry. Perimetry is used to evaluate potential glaucoma patients by mapping out the field of vision. Characteristic changes help in the diagnosis of glaucoma.

The diagnosis of glaucoma should in no way limit a person's lifestyle. New medical treatments are continuing to be developed which will save thousands of patients from this "sneak thief of sight."

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