

*Columbus Ophthalmology Associates*  
**PIGMENTARY 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 why is early detection important?**

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. 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.

**What is Pigmentary glaucoma?**

Pigmentary glaucoma is a specific type of open angle glaucoma. It derives its name because the pigment from the iris, the colored portion of the eye, blocks the delicate drainage canals. This form of glaucoma occurs in younger patients and most often in people who are myopic or nearsighted.

As pigment blocks the drains there is also deposition along the back of the cornea. During a routine exam, eye doctors can tell if certain patients are at higher risk for Pigmentary glaucoma. A condition known as "Pigmentary dispersion syndrome" places patients at a higher risk. Pigment is seen on the cornea and within the drainage system. Intraocular pressure readings can build up with time and patients with this syndrome need to be followed very closely.

**What treatment is available?**

The treatment for Pigmentary glaucoma is most often with ocular drops although laser surgery as well as microsurgery is sometimes necessary. Early detection and control of the intraocular pressure readings are most important. Life long follow up is necessary to insure that damage does not occur.

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