

# *Some useful information*

## **What is Glaucoma?**

Glaucoma is a condition where damage occurs to the nerve fibres in the retina at the back of the eye. This is usually caused by an increase in the pressure of the eye which affects the performance of the nerves. If untreated, Glaucoma can lead to permanent loss of vision. In most cases people do not experience any symptoms and therefore are unaware that they have Glaucoma.

Glaucoma normally affects people over the age of 40 and is much more common as people get older.

## **Do my family need to be checked?**

Glaucoma can run in families and so it is recommended that family members over the age of 40 have their eyes examined by their optometrist. For parents, brothers, sisters and children of someone with Glaucoma this examination will be free on the NHS

More information about Glaucoma can be obtained from the excellent Royal National Institute of the Blind website at [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) in their 'Eye Info' section and the International Glaucoma Association [www.iga.org.uk](http://www.iga.org.uk).

## **Gloucestershire Hospitals contact number:**

Appointments: 0300 422 226871, 5975, 5973, 6878

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## **Gloucestershire's Glaucoma Refinement Referral Scheme**

So  
what  
happens  
next?

*GLoCesteshire*

Gloucestershire Local Optometric Committee

## **Diagnosing Glaucoma**

The results of several tests within your eye examination indicate that there is a strong possibility that you may have or may be at risk of having Glaucoma. Your optometrist has decided from the results to refer you to a specialist Glaucoma clinic in the hospital where you will be examined by a consultant ophthalmologist who will be able to determine whether you have glaucoma and whether treatment is required. This is a direct referral and therefore there is no need for you to make an appointment with your GP but **please take a list of your current medications to the hospital appointment**. A copy of the referral form will be sent to your GP so that they are aware of what is happening. In the next week or so you will receive a letter asking you to telephone to make an appointment in a Glaucoma Clinic. You will be given a choice of which hospital you would like to attend.

## **What will happen at the Hospital?**

At the hospital you will have the important tests repeated. This will include the visual fields and the eye pressure measurement. You may also have a photograph taken of the optic nerve at the back of your eye. It is changes to the appearance of the optic nerve which is one of the best indicators of Glaucoma. You will then see an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) who will examine your eyes and make a decision as to whether you have Glaucoma. Please **do not drive** to your appointment as you may have your eyes dilated which can blur your vision. After the appointment the eye doctor will write to your optometrist, unless you specify otherwise.

## **What treatment will I need ?**

If **Glaucoma is confirmed** then it is likely that you will be given eye drops which will help to reduce the pressure of the eye. In a few cases, a small surgical procedure is a more successful means of controlling the pressure. It is important to attend the hospital for regular checks; and your doctor will indicate when these need to be.

If you are assessed as **not having Glaucoma but at high risk** of developing glaucoma in the future then you will be reviewed in a hospital clinic on a regular basis.

If you are found **not to have Glaucoma** and the doctor is happy with your eyes you will be referred back to your community optometrist who will keep you under regular review. In this case it is important to follow the advice of your optometrist as to how often you are reviewed and **never to go over two years between appointments**.

## **What will happen to my vision?**

Early detection and treatment of Glaucoma is the key to protecting your eyes from the loss of vision which can happen if no action is taken. Your eye doctor will talk to you about the effects of Glaucoma on your vision and any implications it may have for you. One of the goals of this referral scheme is to improve the early detection of Glaucoma and therefore to prevent or minimise loss of vision