

# Century Eye Care Centre

## GLAUCOMA (sneak thief of sight)

### What is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a condition wherein the pressure of fluid within the eye (hydrostatic pressures within the eye) gradually increases to a level not tolerated by the sensitive tissues of the eye. The optic nerve, which is similar to a cable wire carrying visual images to the brain, is the portion of the eye susceptible to damage from glaucoma. Such damage is irreparable and visual loss due to glaucoma is irreversible.

### What causes Glaucoma?

There is a fluid filled chamber in the front of the eye called the anterior chamber. It is filled with aqueous humour, which bathes and nourishes the tissues of the eye. If the drainage of this fluid is restricted, for reasons yet unknown, pressure builds up within the eye causing glaucoma.

### Who is likely to get Glaucoma?

One of the leading causes of blindness in India, about 3 percent of the general population have some form of glaucoma.

- Persons over the age of 40 are more likely to develop glaucoma. However, the disease may occur in people of all ages including newborns.
- Persons with myopia, diabetes, systemic hypertension, history of injury and family history of glaucoma have an increased risk.

### What are the symptoms of Glaucoma?

In most cases of glaucoma, the patient is not aware of the gradual loss of sight until vision is significantly impaired. However, if glaucoma progresses without adequate treatment, the following symptoms may occur in some individuals:

- Pain around the eyes when coming out from darkness
- Coloured halo rings seen around light bulbs especially in the mornings and nights
- Frequent change of reading glasses, headache, pain and redness of the eyes
- Reduced vision in dim illumination and during nights
- Gradual decrease of side vision with progression of glaucoma
- Blurring of vision

### How is Glaucoma detected?

A simple test with a device called the tonometer measures pressure within the eye. This test alone cannot detect all glaucomas. The back of the eye should be inspected to view the optic nerve after dilating the pupils. Side vision may also be examined by a computer-assisted, simple test called perimetry (visual field examination).

### How is glaucoma treated?

The loss of vision due to glaucoma is irreversible. However, appropriate treatment and regular follow-up can preserve residual vision. Earlier the diagnosis, better the chances of arresting visual impairment.

#### Medications

For most people with glaucoma, regular use of medications will control the increased fluid pressure. ***If treatment is discontinued or neglected, further damage of eyesight may occur.*** However, in some, drugs may stop working after a period of time. In these situations, the ophthalmologist can help by adding or changing medications or by choosing another type of treatment: laser or surgical methods. Periodical eye examinations are therefore essential to ensure that the medications are working.