

Correctly diagnosing glaucoma starts with knowing what to look for.

What exactly is glaucoma?

Affecting nearly one in every 50 adults over the age of 40, it's a complicated, slow-moving condition in which damage to the optic nerve can cause progressive, irreversible vision loss leading to blindness.

While universally held to be caused by fluid pressure buildup behind the eye, glaucoma is a very confusing condition that can be difficult to diagnose. The most common type of glaucoma, known as open-angle glaucoma, often has no symptoms at all other than slow vision loss.

If you've had your eye pressure measured and it was normal, for example, you may still have glaucoma, while higher pressure numbers don't necessarily mean that glaucoma is the problem or cause of vision issues.

In addition, certain people are found to be at higher risk for the disease. They include patients:

- with family members who have glaucoma
- with a history of diabetes
- with high blood pressure
- who are African-American

Further complicating the process of determining glaucoma, the disease's symptoms are often similar to indicators seen in other

conditions, such as macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, migraine headache and stroke.

Because most people have no symptoms of chronic open-angle glaucoma in the early stages, a diagnosis is easy to miss or delay. Glaucoma should be treated early to prevent serious complications, such as blindness, so it's critical you seek regular eye care to get any problems diagnosed and treated as soon as possible.

As with any part of a personal wellness journey, your diligent attention to annual checkups and preventive maintenance is only part of the story. Some conditions or symptoms may require you to look for additional expertise or counsel.

Glaucoma is exactly the kind of complex, vague disease that inspires the mission of Best Doctors. Our meticulous, highly specialized analysis of your health care records is just what the doctor ordered when dealing with medical conditions that don't have straightforward, definitive diagnoses.

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