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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO GLAUCOMA



BAPTIST EYE SURGEONS
excellence in eye care

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO GLAUCOMA SURGERY

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Introduction: Why Is Glaucoma Called The Silent Thief of Sight?

Glaucoma is the second most common cause of blindness in the U.S, affecting an estimated 3 million Americans. Due to the aging population, the National Eye Institute projects this number will increase by 58% to affect 4.2 million Americans by 2030.

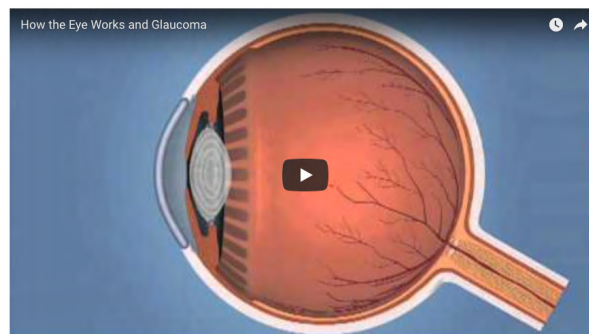
Glaucoma causes damage to the eye's optic nerve, which connects the eyeball to the brain. Over time, damage to the optic nerve causes permanent vision loss or blindness.

Because the disease has no early signs or symptoms until vision loss begins, glaucoma is often referred to as the "silent thief of sight." Once the disease has advanced to the point that symptoms are apparent and your vision is impaired, it's usually too late to prevent or reverse vision loss. As the disease progresses, glaucoma may cause symptoms, such as:

- Frequent mild headaches.
- A noticeable loss of peripheral vision.
- Increased difficulty with night vision.
- Frequent redness in one or both eyes, often accompanied by blurred vision or pain.

To understand how glaucoma develops and how it affects your vision,

watch this short video.





Are You At Risk For Glaucoma?

You most likely know that your family's health history is one of the most important risk factors for health problems like cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. But did you know that genetics also play a role in numerous eye diseases, including glaucoma?

Researchers have mapped several genes for glaucoma, and have shown that you have an increased risk if you have a family history of glaucoma, are over age 40, and/or have high eye pressure.

When Should You See an Ophthalmologist?

Waiting for symptoms to appear or monitoring eye pressure is not sufficient for preventing vision loss from glaucoma. Only a comprehensive exam—including dilation—is effective in evaluating the optic nerve for signs of damage from early stage glaucoma. Fortunately, glaucoma tends to develop slowly, so if caught before any early symptoms show it's possible to begin treatment to help preserve your vision.

It's recommended that anyone over the age of 35, particularly those with a family history of glaucoma, adhere to annual comprehensive eye examinations. If glaucoma is detected, vision loss may be prevented through treatments such as medications or surgery.

Specifically, you have a higher risk of developing glaucoma and should be screened regularly if you:

- Have a family history of the disease.
- Are over the age of 40, particularly if you're an African American.
- Are age 60 or older, and Hispanics/Latinos are at a higher risk in this age group.
- Have high eye pressure.
- Are diabetic.



When conducting a comprehensive glaucoma exam, your doctor will test different parts of your eyes to detect any abnormalities in your inner eye pressure, the shape and color of your optic nerve, your complete field of vision, the angle in the eye where the iris meets the cornea, and the thickness of the cornea itself.

Your ophthalmologist will measure the pressure within your eye with an instrument called a tonometer. After applying numbing eye drops, the ophthalmologist will administer a small amount of pressure to your eye with a tiny device to measure your eye pressure.

Choosing An Ophthalmologist

If you're concerned about glaucoma, you may have already searched online to locate glaucoma specialists in your area. While Google and other search engines can be great tools for finding relevant information, it's important to take a step beyond relying on first page search results as the best referrals.

Here are a few tips that will help you find an ophthalmologist who specializes in glaucoma:

1- Look for an ophthalmologist, not an optometrist or an optician.

An ophthalmologist is an M.D. who has four years of medical education, followed by a year of internship, followed by 3 to 5 years of post-graduate training in ophthalmology. While optometrists are capable of diagnosing and treating typical vision problems like nearsightedness and farsightedness, only ophthalmologists are trained to diagnose and treat more complex conditions like glaucoma. (To see more about the difference between ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians, [click here.](#))

2- Read what other patients are saying about their ophthalmologist.

Online reviews and patient testimonials are good things to consider when looking for an eye doctor. You probably already know what qualities you find most important in an eyecare practice, but also look for keywords such as: professional, courteous, competent, successful outcome, etc.

3- Find out what the eye doctor specializes in.

All eye doctors have different specialties, so put some time into finding an ophthalmologist who specializes in treating glaucoma. Most of the time, this information is posted on the eye doctor's website. If multiple eye doctors are part of the same practice, look at the credentials of each one to determine which eye doctor is experienced in glaucoma.

[Schedule My Comprehensive Eye Exam](#)



Treatments

Some people with glaucoma have “low vision.” Low vision means that you may have difficulty doing routine things even when wearing glasses or contact lenses. Low vision can result in:

- Less ability to see shades of the same color.
- Sensitivity to glare, or light.
- Reduced ability to see fine details.

A variety of products and resources are available to help people who have low vision, such as magnifiers, colored lenses, and computer text enlargers. If you have low vision concerns, help is available. Discuss your concerns with your eye doctor.

Even if you aren’t experiencing low vision, getting treatment and following the recommended treatment plan are essential steps to preserving your eyesight so that you don’t develop low vision or permanent vision loss. If you have been newly diagnosed with glaucoma, you may need to have your eye pressure checked regularly until it is under control. When your eye pressure is at a safe level you still may need to see your doctor several times a year for checkups.

There are a number of medications to treat glaucoma. Typically, medications are intended to reduce elevated eye pressure and prevent damage to the optic nerve. Your doctor may prescribe a combination of medications or change your prescription over time to increase effectiveness, or to reduce any adverse side effects.



Questions To Ask

Talk with your ophthalmologist about treatment options, and which ones may be most appropriate for your condition.

Ask the following questions about your treatment plan:

- What are my treatment options?
- Is medication necessary for me? Why?
- What medications do you recommend? Will they interact with any other medications or dietary supplements I am taking?
- What are the possible risks and side effects of this medication?
- What could happen without medication?
- How long will I need treatment?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?
- How often will I need checkups?
- At what point might I need to have surgery?



If Glaucoma Surgery Is Recommended

If glaucoma is detected in the early stages, before substantial vision loss occurs, it can often be controlled so that severe vision loss is prevented. However, if oral medications and eye drops don't control your glaucoma, surgery may be recommended. There are multiple surgical treatments for glaucoma including:

- Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty
- Laser Surgery
- Incisional Surgery

There are several types of laser surgeries used to treat glaucoma, and the type of laser surgery your eye surgeons may recommend will depend on the the severity of your glaucoma. Lasers produce a focused beam of light that can make a very small burn or opening in your eye tissue, depending on the strength of the light beam.

When medicines and laser surgeries fail to adequately lower eye pressure, doctors may recommend a procedure called filtering surgery, or incisional surgery. During this type of surgery, a tiny drainage hole is made in the sclera (the white part of the eye) in a procedure called a trabeculectomy or a sclerostomy. The drainage hole allows fluid to flow out of the eye, which helps lower eye pressure. Lower eye pressure then prevents or reduces further damage to the optic nerve.

There are also cutting-edge surgical procedures known as MIGS, which stands for MicroInvasive Glaucoma Surgery. These procedures can be performed in conjunction with cataract surgery and use the same corneal incision. The latest advances in MIGS procedures include Cypass stent insertion, Goniotomy, and XEN gel stent insertion.

If you do require some form of glaucoma surgery, it's important to know which questions you need to ask the surgeon before your procedure so that you can be fully informed.



Questions To Ask

Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask your eye surgeon to explain their reasoning behind a surgical recommendation. A good eye surgeon will want you to make a fully informed decision concerning the health of your eyes, and to feel confident in the surgical recommendation.

During your appointment, ask:

- Do you recommend laser treatment or incisional surgery for my condition, and why?
- How many surgeries like this have you performed?
- What is the success rate?
- What are the risks associated with this procedure?
- What are the benefits?
- What will I feel during the surgery?
- What can I expect my vision to be like after surgery?
- Are there any alternatives to this procedure?

After your appointment, ask yourself:

- Did your eye doctor explain your eye condition clearly?
- Do you understand what will happen before, during, and after the surgery?
- Did your eye doctor address the concerns you had and put you at ease?
- Do you trust that your eye doctor will do a good job and follow up with you after your surgery?
- Do you know what you need to do to prepare for the surgery?
- Do you know who to call if you have additional questions before the day of surgery?

Download a printable list of these questions to bring with you to your appointment.

[Download & Print](#)

If your eye doctor does not meet your expectations or you feel uncomfortable following through with their recommendation, always get a second opinion. [All of our surgeons at Baptist Eye](#) are experienced in what they do and will tell you their honest opinion the first time around.

If you want to get a second opinion after a consultation with one of our eye surgeons, you can [schedule an appointment](#) with another doctor from our practice. We also certainly won't be offended if you also decide to look elsewhere. It's most important that you're informed and confident when making decisions about your eye health, because your quality of life is what's at stake.

Baptist Eye Surgeons has several eye doctors in different subspecialties, including glaucoma.

Meet Our Surgeons



Dr. Andrew Anzeljc



Dr. Marc A. Bodenheimer



Dr. Brittany N. Cook



Dr. L. Nichols Cook



Dr. Albert K. Holmes



Dr. Mark Y. Ivens



Dr. Charles H. Lindsey



Dr. J. Franklin Murchison



Dr. Paul Benjamin Pruett



Dr. Darin S. Smith



The Day Of Surgery

Where To Go

Our doctors perform surgical procedures at Tennessee Valley Eye Center (TVEC) on the 2nd Floor. TVEC is located at: 140 Capital Dr. Knoxville, TN 37922. TVEC will call you one to two days before the day of your surgery to remind you what time to arrive.

Get Directions to Tennessee Valley Eye Center

DOs and DON'TS The Day Of Surgery

- If you arrive before noon, **DON'T EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING** past midnight including water, coffee, hard candy, or gum. If you arrive after noon, you may **ONLY DRINK CLEAR LIQUIDS** until 7:00 a.m. Clear liquids include: water, black coffee, tea, Sprite, Coke, Jell-O, clear bouillon, or apple juice.
- Don't use any tobacco products after midnight.
- Do take heart, blood pressure, seizure, breathing, and stomach medications with only a sip of water. Don't take insulin or oral diabetic medications the morning of surgery.
- Do use all prescribed eye drops as directed by your eye surgeon. Pick up your post-op eye drops from your pharmacy **BEFORE** your surgery.
- Do wear loose, comfortable clothing. Your shirt must be button-up (no undershirts).
- Don't wear jewelry (including wedding rings), or makeup, nail polish, or hairspray.
- Do bring your current insurance cards, a photo ID, and medications (including eye drops) on the day of surgery. Do **NOT** bring any valuables.
- Do ask someone to be your driver. You **MUST** be accompanied by a responsible adult driver who will remain at the TVEC surgical center or your surgery will be cancelled.
- Nursing home patients must be accompanied by an adult or person possessing Power of Attorney for them.
- Do notify your doctor of any changes in your health, such as illnesses, recent hospitalizations, medical tests, or surgery.



Preparation

Before you undergo surgery, you'll be asked to verify your name, date of birth, and which eye your surgeon will be operating on. Most likely, you'll be asked to verify this information multiple times with various members of the surgical team.

Repetitive confirmation has been proven to reduce wrong-patient errors in high-volume, busy surgical centers. Rest assured, we know who you are and we know exactly which eye we're operating on, but following these guidelines is protocol.

After verifying your identity and confirming the correct eye again, your eye will be numbed with preoperative drops. Your surgeon may also write his initials in surgical marker next to the appropriate eye but don't worry, it will be easily wiped away after surgery.

The Procedure

Your surgical care team will have carefully reviewed which procedure will be performed, whether it's a type of laser treatment or a surgical incision. They will again review each step of the procedure and verify that all instruments are available and calibrated correctly.

Depending on the type of procedure you'll be having, you may be given a local anesthetic and relaxing medications such as an I.V. sedation. In addition, you may receive an injection around or behind the eye to prevent eye movement. This injection is not painful when I.V. sedation is used first. You will be relaxed and drowsy and will not experience any pain during surgery.

After the surgery, your eye may be a bit irritated and your vision may be slightly blurry, so you must arrange to have a ride home after your surgery.



Recovery From Glaucoma Surgery

Typically, patients can resume normal daily activities the day after laser surgery. Depending on the type of procedure you have, you may be advised to avoid driving and reading, or engaging in other activities that may strain your eyes. Because each case is different, your doctor will give you specific advice, but in general you will be advised to:

- Use your prescribed eye drops exactly as instructed to prevent infection and reduce internal inflammation.
- Avoid bending over after the procedure as doing so puts unnecessary pressure on your eye.
- Refrain from lifting heavy objects or other strenuous activity for the first month.
- Don't go swimming or use a hot tub the first month after surgery.
- Even if your eye feels itchy, do not rub or push on it as you could damage your eye.
- Be careful not to expose your eye to unnecessary grime, dust, dirt, or wind during the first few weeks after glaucoma surgery. Wear sunglasses when outside, or protective eyewear when necessary.
- Schedule a follow-up appointment after your glaucoma surgery so your ophthalmologist can make sure that there are no postoperative complications and that your recovery is on track.

Your eye doctor may recommend that you continue to take glaucoma medication on an ongoing basis to control your eye pressure. However, surgery may lessen the amount of medication needed.

The purpose of glaucoma surgeries is to lower the pressure in your eye in order to prevent further damage to the optic nerve. The length of time the pressure remains lower depends on the type of surgery you have as well as your age, race, and many other factors. Some people may need another surgery at some point in the future to better control the glaucoma.

Have questions or concerns? Be sure to address them with your eye surgeon before the day of your surgery so you can get a good night's sleep the night before. You can reach Baptist Eye Surgeons by calling 865-579-3920. For questions related to the surgical center, call Tennessee Valley Eye Center at 865-251-0338.



Don't Let Glaucoma Rob You Of Your Vision

As a leader in ophthalmology in the state of Tennessee, Baptist Eye Surgeons strives to help our patients manage their glaucoma and, when necessary, help them preserve their vision through surgical treatments. If you have questions about glaucoma or if you need a comprehensive eye examination for glaucoma, please fill out this online form to schedule an appointment, or give us a call at 865-579-3920 today.

Contact Baptist Eye Surgeons