

Glaucoma and Your Eye Drops

Patient information leaflet

What glaucoma is

Glaucoma is damage to the optic nerve, the cable carrying images from the eye to the brain. It usually develops slowly and painlessly, beginning at the edges of vision where the brain compensates so well that nothing seems wrong. By the time a change is noticed, a considerable amount of nerve has already been lost, and that loss is permanent.

Why we treat it

Vision already lost cannot be restored, but the vision you have can be protected. Lowering the pressure inside the eye is the only treatment proven to do this. A target pressure is set for your eye specifically, and treatment is adjusted until that target is reached and held.

What your appointments involve

- Pressure measurement, corrected for the thickness of your cornea
- Optic nerve scan (OCT), which measures the nerve fibre layer in microns and detects change years before a field test does
- Visual field test, which maps your side vision. Results vary between visits, so trends matter more than any single test
- Review every three to six months once you are stable

How to use your drops correctly

- Wash your hands. Tilt your head back and look up.
- Pull the lower lid down to make a small pocket and let one drop fall into it. Do not touch the bottle to your eye or lashes.
- Close the eye gently for two minutes and press lightly at the inner corner beside the nose. This keeps the drop in the eye and reduces effects elsewhere in the body.
- If you use more than one drop, wait three to five minutes between them.
- One drop is enough — more simply overflows.
- Remove contact lenses first and wait fifteen minutes before replacing them.

Making them part of your day

Using the drops consistently is the strongest single predictor of keeping your sight — stronger than which drop you use. Link the drop to something you already do daily, such as brushing your teeth, and keep a spare bottle where you spend most of your time. If you forget a dose, take it when you remember and carry on as usual; do not double up.

Side effects worth knowing

Some drops cause mild redness, a gritty feeling, longer or darker lashes or, over years, a subtle change in iris colour. If the surface of your eye becomes uncomfortable, preservative-free versions are available. Tell us rather than stopping — a drop you cannot tolerate can almost always be exchanged for another.

Seek care the same day if you develop

- Severe eye pain with redness, headache or nausea
- Coloured haloes around lights with blurred vision
- A sudden reduction in vision

Do not stop your drops because your eyes feel well — glaucoma causes no symptoms until late. Reviewed by Dr. Aysun Yucel Gencoglu, MD, FEBO, FICO.

Notes for you from today's consultation