

Understanding Glaucoma: Patient



WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

- Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that can result in **vision loss if not treated**.
- In most cases patients have a build-up of the fluid which flows through the eye – this leads to **increased pressure** in the eye which can damage the optic nerve resulting in gradual loss of sight.
- Glaucoma is called the “sneak thief” of sight because it has no symptoms in the early stages-it does not make your eyes red or cause pain.
- There are different types of glaucoma - **primary open-angle glaucoma** is the most common type.
- **Directly related family members** of glaucoma patients have an 8-times increased risk of developing the disease.
- **50% of people** with glaucoma in Australia are **undiagnosed**.

HOW DOES GLAUCOMA MEDICATION WORK?

- **Increased eye pressure** is a major risk factor for optic nerve damage
- Medication works by **lowering eye pressure**
- Because glaucoma often has **no symptoms** - people may be tempted to stop taking, or may forget to take, their medication.
- Preservation of vision requires patients to take their **medication**, usually eye drops, **everyday**.
- A number of medications are currently in use to treat glaucoma. Your doctor may prescribe a **combination** of medications.

HOW SHOULD I USE MY GLAUCOMA EYE DROPS?

1. **Tilt your head** backward while sitting, standing, or lying down. With your index finger, gently pull down your lower eye-lid to form a pocket.
2. **Look up** - squeeze one drop into the pocket in your lower lid.
3. **Close your eye** - Gently press on the inside corner (near your nose) of your closed eye with your finger for two minutes.
4. **If you need drops in both eyes, repeat steps 1 – 3 for your other eye.**

HOW WILL I REMEMBER MY MEDICATION?

- **Consistency** - Always take your eye drops at the same time every day
- **Send yourself a signal** - Set a daily clock, phone or watch alarm to serve as a reminder to take your eye drops.
- **Make sure you don't run out of medication** - Once you know how long your medication should last, mark your calendar to refill your prescription one week before you expect to run out.

WHAT CAN MY PHARMACIST DO?

- Help you **understand glaucoma** and your medication
- Help you if you are experiencing **any problems** with your glaucoma medication (side effects, difficulty using your eye drops, difficulty remembering to take your medication regularly)
- Show you **how to use** your eye drops correctly
- **Answer any questions** you may have about managing your glaucoma

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Be sure to take your glaucoma medication/s **every day**
 - Have **regular** eye health checks
 - Help protect the vision of **family members** - encourage your family members to undergo eye examinations from the age of 35
 - Call **Glaucoma Australia:** 1800 500 880 and visit www.glaucoma.org.au
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