

Glaucoma and Your Relatives

Although most relatives of people diagnosed with primary open angle glaucoma (POAG) will not have the condition, close blood relatives (brother, sister, parent, child) have an increased risk of developing glaucoma. In general, it is at least four times more likely they will develop glaucoma than others without a family history. The risk is higher to brothers and sisters than to parents and children. Other more distant relatives are also at some risk.

If two or more members of a family have already been diagnosed with POAG, testing the other members is particularly advisable.

It is recommended that people with POAG alert their relatives to the need for regular sight tests (every two years).

When making an appointment for a sight test, they should tell the eye specialist or optometrist that a relative has glaucoma and ensure all three tests for detecting glaucoma are used. These tests are rapid and painless. They are:

1. Ophthalmoscopy:

Viewing the appearance of the optic nerve in the back of the eye using an ophthalmoscope (special torch) or slit lamp

2. Tonometry:

Measuring the level of pressure within the eye

3. Perimetry:

Testing the field of vision

A combination of all three tests has been shown to increase the likelihood of detecting POAG when compared with a single test. Under current regulations (2013) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland a sight test and examination by an optometrist is paid for by the NHS for those relatives (brothers, sisters, parents and children) of glaucoma, patients aged 40 and over, and also for everybody aged 60 and over.

However, the optometrist may charge for carrying out the three glaucoma tests even if the basic examination is paid for by the NHS, so it is worth being aware of the cost implications and asking when arranging a visit. In Scotland, the NHS will pay for glaucoma examinations offered by optometrists, regardless of age.

There is effective treatment for glaucoma. The earlier this condition is detected, the more successful the treatment is likely to be in controlling it and preventing potential visual loss. Most people in the early stages of glaucoma have no symptoms. It is therefore important to ensure that relatives of those diagnosed with POAG have regular eye examinations, including all three glaucoma tests.

We value your feedback, please help us improve our information by sending us your comments about the content and format of this publication at marketing@iga.org.uk or by writing to us at the address below.



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For more information

For a free information pack, or to discuss your glaucoma, please call Sightline on **01233 64 81 70**

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A full list of references and information sources used in the compilation of this leaflet is available on request by phone: 01233 64 81 70 (Sightline) or by email: info@iga.org.uk

Formed in 1974, the IGA has the mission to raise awareness of glaucoma, promote research related to early diagnosis and treatment and to provide support to patients and all those who care for them. Funded entirely by its members and donors (no government or statutory funding) the Association provides its services free of charge to anyone in need of assistance.

If you found this leaflet helpful and would like to support our work, please contact us on 01233 64 81 64 or visit www.glaucoma-association.com to make a donation or become a member (benefits: quarterly magazine, invitations to patient meetings, support research).

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