



PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

## **Ten surprising facts you didn't know about glaucoma**

More than 64 million people worldwide are affected by glaucoma<sup>1</sup> and it is one of the largest causes of blindness in the world<sup>1</sup>. The eye condition often has a gradual onset which is why many people don't realise they have it.

While it's undeniable that regular eye tests can help detect early signs, there are lots of surprising facts about the condition that are not as evident. That is why this Glaucoma Awareness Week (June 17-23), Specsavers has shared 10 facts you might not know about glaucoma.

### **Caffeine is best to avoid**

If your eye pressure is too high it can increase the risk of developing glaucoma. Caffeine has been shown to increase eye pressure for 90 minutes, so if you're at risk of developing glaucoma it's best to drink in moderation<sup>2</sup>.

### **Lots of celebrities have glaucoma**

There are many high profile stars who live with the condition. U2 singer Bono revealed in 2014 that he has had glaucoma for 20 years and is receiving ongoing treatment. Astronaut John Glenn nearly lost his sight to it and campaigned in the early 00s, urging people to get regular eye tests. Other celebrities known to have had glaucoma are Whoopi Goldberg, Dame Maggie Smith and Andrea Bocelli.

### **Exercise is always a good idea**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.glaucoma-association.com/about-the-iga/what-we-do/campaigns/men-more-likely-to-have-significant-glaucoma-sight-loss/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brightfocus.org/glaucoma/article/there-connection-between-diet-and-glaucoma>

While caffeine can raise eye pressure, some studies<sup>3</sup> indicate that regular exercise can lower it. While there is no evidence to prove this can directly prevent glaucoma, it does support overall eye health and that can only be a good thing.

### **Breaking news: smoking is bad for you**

Smoking has now been shown to be a risk factor for developing diabetes which in turn known to increase the risk of developing glaucoma.

### **African men and women are at higher risk of glaucoma**

Glaucoma strikes earlier and progresses faster in African men and women and occurs about five times more often. The risk for glaucoma is 20% higher if glaucoma is in your family and blindness from glaucoma is about six times more common<sup>4</sup>.

Specsavers clinical spokesperson, Dr Nigel Best says: 'There are several factors which could make you more at risk of developing glaucoma such as family history of the disease. Those who have black–African heritage or who have higher levels of short sightedness are also more at risk. Your age also plays a big part. Two in every 100 people over 40 are affected by the condition<sup>5</sup>.'

### **People of a Japanese origin are at risk of normal-tension glaucoma**

East Asians experience the highest rate of blindness in the world from one of the two most common types of glaucoma. Japanese populations, however, have a substantially higher incidence of normal tension glaucoma<sup>6</sup>. (A form of glaucoma where optic nerve damage occurs even though pressures in the eye are not elevated).

### **Eating your greens can lower risks**

Having a balanced, healthy diet can improve our wellbeing overall. But, there are also studies on the impact green vegetable have on our eyes. Intake of dietary nitrates,

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.brightfocus.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.glaucoma.org/glaucoma/african-americans-and-glaucoma.php>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.glaucoma-association.com/about-the-iga/what-we-do/campaigns/men-more-likely-to-have-significant-glaucoma-sight-loss/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.glaucoma.org/gleams/glaucoma-in-asian-populations.php>

derived mainly from green leafy vegetables, was associated with a 20 to 30 percent lower risk of primary open-angle glaucoma.<sup>7</sup> Yellow and orange fruits and vegetables also support eye health.

### **Seeds never cease to amaze**

It's true that vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids can play a protective role in the treatment of glaucoma.<sup>8</sup> But, that doesn't mean our friend omega 6 should be forgotten. A recently published prospective study found that a diet with a high omega 3:6 ratio intake, and thus low in omega 6, was associated with a higher risk of glaucoma.<sup>9</sup> Foods such as flaxseeds, hempseeds, pumpkin and sunflower seeds are all high in omega 6.

### **Drive carefully**

Group Two drivers (those who drive Lorries and buses) need to advise the DVLA even if they have glaucoma in just one eye, as tests are more stringent for commercial drivers. For Group One drivers (cars and motorcycles), the DVLA only needs to be advised of glaucoma when it affects both eyes.

### **There are certain herbs to avoid**

Certain herbs such as ginkgo and bilberry may increase the risk of bleeding with glaucoma surgery. It is important to discuss with your optometrist all prescription, herbal, vitamin, mineral, and over-the-counter remedies<sup>10</sup>.

The good news is glaucoma can generally be treated effectively if detected early and in most cases, a daily eye drop can be used for treatment.

Dr Best concludes: 'Our sight is precious. We ensure we visit our dentist every six months, and a sight test every two years should also be on everyone's to do list. It can, quite literally, save your sight.'

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.brightfocus.org/glaucoma/article/there-connection-between-diet-and-glaucoma>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3340802/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.brightfocus.org/glaucoma/article/there-connection-between-diet-and-glaucoma>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.glaucoma.org/treatment/what-vitamins-and-nutrients-will-help-prevent-my-glaucoma-from-worsening.php>

For further information or to book an eye test visit: <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/>

- Ends -

Issued by Beattie Communications on behalf of Specsavers.

[specsavers.com](https://www.specsavers.com)



specsavers official



specsavers



@specsavers

**For further information please contact:**

[NationalSpecsavers@beattiegroupp.com](mailto:NationalSpecsavers@beattiegroupp.com) / 020 7053 6000