

R N I B



Transforming eye health

PRESS RELEASE

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Five things your optometrist will look for when testing for glaucoma

AROUND 600,000 people in the UK are at risk of going blind due to glaucoma¹. The condition, which is often referred to as the silent thief of sight due to its gradual onset, is one of the largest causes of blindness in the world¹.

Glaucoma can affect anyone – more than 64 million people worldwide have the condition¹ – however, research shows that men are 16% more likely to lose their sight than women with the condition¹ because they do not generally seek medical help as quickly as women.

That is why this World Glaucoma Week (March 11-17), Specsavers is stressing the importance of having regular eye tests to detect the early signs and symptoms of the condition as well as highlighting the common risk factors associated with it.

Raised eye pressure

Specsavers clinical spokesperson, Dr Nigel Best says: 'Glaucoma occurs when naturally-occurring fluid inside the eye does not drain properly, causing a build-up of pressure. The condition often affects both eyes, usually to varying degrees, however, there are two types - chronic glaucoma which develops slowly and acute glaucoma which develops rapidly with a sudden, painful build-up of pressure in the eye.'

When you see your optometrist they will carry out an eye pressure test using a tonometer. This instrument is used to measure the pressure inside the eye and is useful in identifying people who might have or are at risk of developing glaucoma.

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

Change in vision

Dr Best says: 'With chronic glaucoma, the visual loss can initially be very subtle and occurs just beyond your central vision, progressing slowly inwards towards your central vision and outwards into the periphery. Most patients will not be aware of this visual loss due to the way the eyes visual fields overlap, compensating for one another.'

The way this is detected by your optometrist is through the use of a visual field test. During this test you will be shown a sequence of light spots and asked which ones you can see. Any very subtle blind spots, which you will probably be unaware of, can be an indicator of the condition.

However, acute glaucoma is often sudden and painful and may present with other symptoms including blurred vision and haloes around lights.'

Optic nerve damage

When you have glaucoma, the build-up of eye pressure can cause damage to the optic nerve and nerve fibres from the retina.

Dr Best says: 'This can be assessed in a variety of ways during your examination, but the real detail of a customer's eye health will come from a photograph taken with a retinal camera. Digital retinal photography (DRP) captures an image of your optic nerve which can be used as reference for future visits and to track any changes that may occur over time.'

Your genes

Dr Best adds: '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

'Your age also plays a big part,' says Dr Best. 'Two in every 100 people over 40 are affected by the condition¹. 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.'

Optometrists in most Specsavers stores have taken advanced qualifications in glaucoma management to improve their skills and many front of house staff have been given extra training to better support customers with the condition, including how to administrate the eye drops effectively.

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.'

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

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



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Notes to Editors

- Specsavers is a partnership of almost 2,000 locally-run businesses throughout the world -all committed to delivering high quality, affordable optical and hearing care in the communities they serve.
- Each store is part-owned and managed by its own joint venture partners who are supported by key specialists in support offices
- More than 36 million customers are registered with Specsavers and the partnership had a turnover of more than £2.6bn in 2017/18
- More than one in three people who wear glasses in the UK buy them from Specsavers
- Specsavers is a champion of the National Health Service – of its 22.2m customers in the UK, 55% are from the NHS and the company is the largest provider of free NHS digital hearing aids
- Specsavers supports several UK charities and is in partnership with RNIB for a public awareness campaign to transform the nation's eye health.
- Specsavers runs a home-visiting service in the UK and Ireland for those who cannot get to their local store unaccompanied.