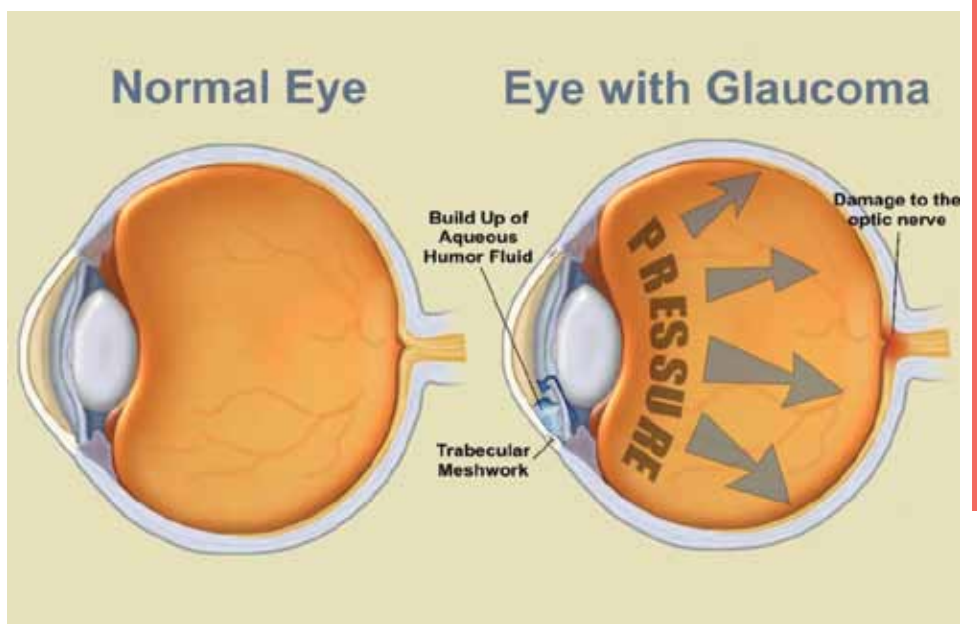


Light up Glaucoma to save sight

There are thousands of New Zealanders right now who are at risk of going blind.



HEALTH

It's estimated 91,000 Kiwis over the age of 40 have glaucoma, but only half of them know it. That leaves 45,000 people who could potentially lose their eyesight.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness in New Zealand – that's why Glaucoma New Zealand is urging people to get behind its annual July appeal.

The annual appeal, Light up Glaucoma, is in its tenth year and raises awareness and funds to help Glaucoma New Zealand continue its sight-saving work.

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve. The nerve fibres progressively die taking away the peripheral vision first. Therefore, there are no symptoms until the disease is quite advanced.

The most common form of glaucoma is open-angle glaucoma, which is hereditary. A family history of glaucoma can increase your risk of the disease tenfold.

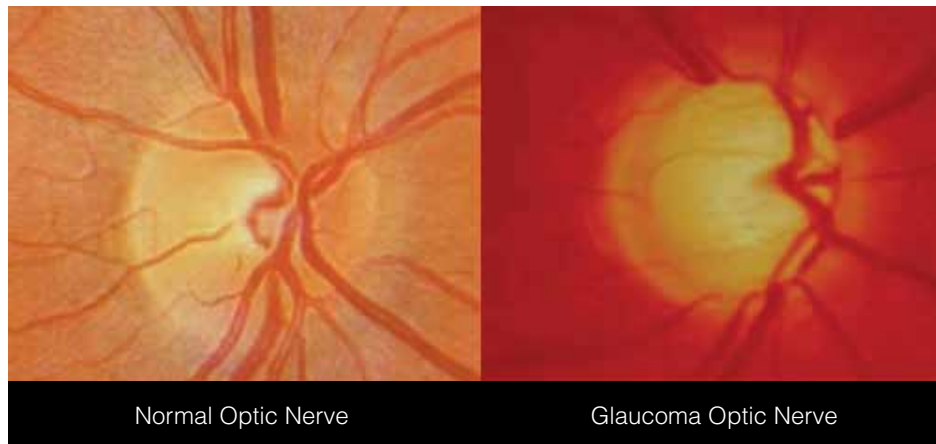
As New Zealand's population ages, more people will be at risk of developing glaucoma.

Currently one in 10 people over the age of 70 have glaucoma. Worldwide, 4.5 per cent of the population has glaucoma – 64 million people – and that's expected to grow to 111.8 million worldwide by 2040.

Early detection is critical

While the statistics are sobering, Glaucoma New Zealand chair Professor Helen Danesh-Meyer says, with early detection and treatment, blindness from glaucoma can be prevented with medication, surgery and laser treatment.

"That's why it's so important to raise



awareness about glaucoma and remind people of the importance of getting regular eye examinations, because it could potentially save the sight of thousands of people."

Known as the silent thief of sight, glaucoma has no early symptoms.

"By the time you do notice symptoms, it's too late because irreversible damage has already been done to your eyes. Our annual appeal raises awareness about how crucial it is to get regular eye examinations to help stop people unnecessarily losing their sight."

We need funds to save sight

The appeal also raises funds. Glaucoma New Zealand is a charity and relies on the generosity of the public.

Funds raised from the annual appeal go towards a range of Glaucoma New Zealand initiatives including:

- its 0800-support line
- nationwide community awareness programmes

- public meetings to share important information on glaucoma and treatment options
- nationwide glaucoma support groups
- free glaucoma resources
- its Eyalights newsletter which goes out to over 8,000 Glaucoma New Zealand members and their families.

When to get checked

Glaucoma New Zealand recommends people have an eye examination by the age of 45 then every five years after that until age 60. After 60, examinations are recommended every three years.

Those with risk factors, such as a family history of glaucoma or steroid use, should be examined earlier. Anyone who notices a change in their eyesight should book an eye examination as soon as possible.

Donations to the annual appeal can be made via Glaucoma New Zealand's website www.glaucoma.org.nz (click on Support Us).

Participating optometrists, ophthalmologists and pharmacies will have Glaucoma New Zealand collection boxes on display.

For more information, email info@glaucoma.org.nz or phone 0800 GLAUCOMA (0800 452 826).



Help is only a phone call away – call Eye Centre Primecare 0800 110 030