



GLAUCOMA & UVEITIS

FACT SHEET

(The term 'glaucoma' refers to a characteristic pattern of damage to the optic nerve)

Not all forms of glaucoma are the same. Some patients experience a condition of inflammation within the eye and as a result of this inflammation glaucoma can develop. This is termed uveitic glaucoma, and it differs in some ways from other forms of glaucoma.

Uveitis is the term used to describe a group of conditions where there is inflammation of one or more layers of the vascular tissues within the eye. The most common form of uveitis, where the front part of the eye experiences the inflammation is also termed 'iritis', because it involves the iris (coloured tissue at the front of the eye). Other structures such as the ciliary body (where the clear aqueous fluid comes into the eye) and the choroid (which lies behind the retina) can also be inflamed. Sometimes the inflammation is caused by an infection but more commonly the cause is unknown. The type of uveitis is named based on where the inflammation occurs and if it is in the ciliary body it is called cyclitis and in the choroid it is called choroiditis.

Patients, who experience episodes of iritis, or other forms of uveitis, can develop a rise in intraocular pressure as a result of the inflammation or adhesions which form within the eye as a result of the inflammation. When raised pressure in the eye causes damage to the optic nerve at the back of the eye, we call this glaucoma.

The raised pressure in the eye is treated with eye drops as with the other forms of glaucoma. The inflammation must also be treated with anti-inflammatory eye drops and sometimes oral medications, depending on its severity and response to treatment. If pressure cannot be controlled with medications and ongoing damage to the optic nerve occurs then glaucoma drainage surgery, trabeculectomy or glaucoma drainage tube, may be required.

Glaucoma associated with uveitis can be more severe than the more common forms of glaucoma, and can affect people at a younger age than more typical glaucoma cases. Treatment required is sometimes more intensive than the more common forms of glaucoma, and there is probably a higher likelihood that surgery may be required to control the pressure. Fortunately effective treatments are available for both the inflammation and the glaucoma that can result from it. Your eye care provider can work with you to manage this.

Treatment has to be varied to meet the particular situation in the individual eye. Your eye care provider will be able to answer specific questions about your situation.

Our Mission: To eliminate glaucoma blindness

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