

Measuring your Eye Pressure or Visual Fields

The pressure in one or both of your eyes was higher than normal when it was measured for the first time or you were found to have a suspect visual field.

This may just have been one abnormal reading. So you may simply need to be measured again, perhaps twice, to see if the pressure is high each time or your visual field defect is consistent. Often a different instrument is used for this.

When your eye pressure is measured again, the optometrist will put drops in your eye to numb the surface. Then he or she will use a small instrument to gently touch the front of your eye.

What if my readings are abnormal?

If your results are still all above normal, you may have a condition called ocular hypertension (OHT) or suspect glaucoma. It is important to investigate this further because OHT/suspect glaucoma increases the risk of glaucoma, which can damage your sight. However, most people with OHT never get glaucoma. (There is more about glaucoma at the end of this leaflet.)

What happens next?

Your optometrist will check for other signs of glaucoma. If the only sign of glaucoma is that your eye pressure is slightly higher than normal or you have a suspicious visual field defect, then taking the measurement again will show whether your eye readings continue to be abnormal. If it is, then your optometrist will arrange for you to visit an eye clinic. However, if the repeat tests shows your readings are within the normal range, then you simply need to have further regular eye examinations with your optometrist.

About your records

The local optometry organisations keep the records for these repeat measurements on a computer. If you are referred to other health professionals, the details may be shared with them to ensure you get the best care. The local optometry organisations will also use the records to check its service to patients and to administer its finances. If you do not wish the NHS to hold and use your details in this way, please tell the optometrist, who will arrange for the details to be removed from the computer system.

More information

What is glaucoma?

It is a group of eye conditions in which the optic nerve (at the back of the eye) is damaged. The common form of glaucoma is the chronic form. This is normally very slow to progress but it gradually damages your peripheral (side) vision. Eventually it results in tunnel vision – like looking down a long tube.

There is a much rarer, acute form of glaucoma, where the pressure in your eye rises rapidly and you need immediate treatment in hospital to avoid permanent damage to your sight. Acute glaucoma is often very painful, your eye may become red and you may feel nauseous (sick) and vomit. In the early stages, you may see rainbow-coloured rings around white lights. If you get these symptoms, you should go to the Accident and Emergency department immediately.

If you need any more advice or explanation, please ask your optometrist.

