

GLAUCOMA; THE SILENT THIEF OF SIGHT

By Dr Bola Adekoya

What is glaucoma? – It refers to a group of eye diseases which affect the optic nerve of the eye. This is the nerve that connects the eye to the brain. It is the number two cause of blindness in Nigeria, but the number one cause of irreversible loss of vision worldwide.

What causes glaucoma? – The exact cause of glaucoma is not known but there are some associated factors. These include; having a family member with glaucoma (genetic), increasing age (above 40 years of age), eye injury, high pressure in the eye, short-sightedness (myopia), history of hypertension or diabetes and some drugs especially steroids, both topical and systemic application.

Who can develop glaucoma? – Glaucoma can affect both the young and the adult. It is no respecter of age but more common in those above 35 years of age.

How can one know they have glaucoma? – Glaucoma is completely symptomless in the initial stage as there is no eye symptom, and people only experience poor vision when the disease has already affected the vision significantly. And this vision loss is IRREVERSIBLE.

What are the treatment options for glaucoma? – There are three major ways of treating glaucoma; medical, laser and surgical treatments. The aim of the treatment is to lower the intra-ocular pressure and prevent further loss of vision. Glaucoma patients should ensure they are very compliant with the use of their eye drops as non-compliance could lead to progression of the disease. They should endeavour to visit their eye doctor (ophthalmologist) regularly for check-up as other type of treatment (laser or surgery) may be necessary if eye drops are not controlling the eye pressures adequately.

How can you prevent glaucoma and glaucoma blindness? – Vision loss from glaucoma can only be prevented by early detection and appropriate treatment. Family members of those with glaucoma should also ensure that they get their eye tested regularly for glaucoma.

**DO NOT ALLOW THE SILENT THIEF OF SIGHT TO STEAL YOUR VISION,
SCREEN YOUR EYE FOR GLAUCOMA NOW!**