

Eye Pressure – What Does It Really Mean?



Eye pressure is important, but it is only one part of the glaucoma picture.

This article explains what eye pressure is, why it can be high, how it is checked and what it means for your eye health.



Regular eye examinations help protect your sight for tomorrow.



Early detection makes a difference.

1 What is eye pressure?

The eye contains a clear fluid called aqueous humour. It is continuously produced and drained from the eye.

The balance between production and drainage creates the **eye pressure**, known as **intraocular pressure (IOP)**.

Eye pressure helps the eye maintain its shape and function.

2 What happens when pressure rises?

If the fluid does not drain properly, pressure can increase. Persistently raised pressure can damage the optic nerve, which can lead to **glaucoma**.

High eye pressure does not automatically mean you have glaucoma.

Some people have raised pressure without detectable nerve damage. This is called **ocular hypertension**.

3 What is a normal eye pressure?

Eye pressure is often around **10 – 21 mmHg**, but there is no single number that determines whether someone has glaucoma.

Doctors also look at the optic nerve, visual field and other findings.

Glaucoma can sometimes occur even when the pressure is within the usual range. This is called **normal-tension glaucoma**.

4 How is eye pressure checked?

Eye pressure is measured using an instrument called a tonometer. It is quick and usually painless.

During a glaucoma assessment, the eye-care professional may also examine the optic nerve and visual field, and sometimes use OCT imaging.



Checking eye pressure with a tonometer

A pressure reading alone cannot diagnose glaucoma.

5 How is raised eye pressure treated?

If treatment is needed, it may include:



Eye drops
to reduce fluid production or improve drainage



Laser treatment
in suitable cases



Surgery
when necessary

The aim is to protect the optic nerve and prevent or slow further sight loss.

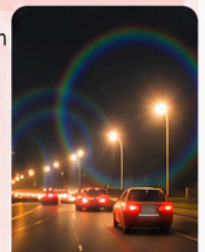
Always use your prescribed eye drops as directed and do not stop them without advice.

6 When is it an emergency?

Most glaucoma develops slowly and may cause no symptoms at first.

Seek urgent medical attention if you experience:

- Sudden severe eye pain
- A red eye
- Blurred vision
- Halos or rainbow-coloured rings around lights
- Headache, nausea or vomiting



Halos around lights can be a sign of an eye emergency.



KEY MESSAGE

Eye pressure is important, but it is only one part of the glaucoma picture. High pressure does not always mean glaucoma, and glaucoma can happen even with normal pressure.

Regular eye examinations help protect your sight.



Coming Next in the Series
Part 11: Understanding the Optic Nerve – Your Eye's Connection to the Brain

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