

Mental Health and Glaucoma

Living with Glaucoma Can Affect Your Mental Health

Isolation: People with glaucoma can feel alone. Especially if you have lost or are losing vision, you may no longer feel connected with your friends and family.

Adjustment over time: Glaucoma is a lifelong disease that can affect your mental health. Times that can be hard may include when you get the diagnosis of glaucoma, changes in your vision or vision loss, and if you have complications or side effects from your treatments.

Impact on yourself and your family: It can be hard on you and your family: having glaucoma, getting to appointments, keeping up with treatments, and dealing with vision loss. It can be hard for families to understand what you are going through and how to help. They may not understand how glaucoma is affecting your vision.

Vision loss: People who have vision loss from glaucoma may have different emotions, especially with new challenges.

Talk About Your Concerns

Whether you're newly diagnosed or have had glaucoma for years, living with the uncertainty of vision loss and treatment demands can be difficult. These feelings are normal. It's important to share your feelings with your doctor, trusted family member, faith leader or other trusted individual. Be as open as you can be until you find people who will listen and support you.

Support Groups

Some patients and caregivers may find that in-person or virtual support groups are helpful. Ask your doctor for recommendations in your area. PreventBlindness.org is an example of a group that offers "The Glaucoma Community," which includes a moderated "Community Chat" for on-line support and advice.

Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Taking care of your physical health can positively affect your mental health. Meditation, exercise, and healthy eating are activities that can benefit mental health.

Sometimes medications for your mental health can have warnings about glaucoma. While usually safe for people with glaucoma, you can ask your doctor about what would be safe for you.

For more information, see the "Lifestyle Factors and Glaucoma" handout at the AGS website.

Vision Rehabilitation

Early glaucoma usually does not affect your vision. Later stages of glaucoma can cause difficulty with contrast (seeing shades or colors), missing or blurred areas of your vision ("blind spots"), loss of side vision, cloudiness of vision, and even blindness. If you have any level of vision loss from glaucoma and it is affecting your mental health and quality of life, ask your doctor for a referral for Vision Rehabilitation Services. Also, ask about local or state services. Nationally, HadleyHelps.org is an example of a non-profit that helps people with vision loss with resources via web, phone, and mail.

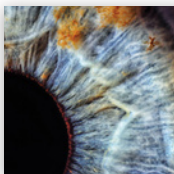
Online Research and Resources

These days, there is a lot of information available online to patients. While doing your own web-based research is important, nothing replaces the expertise that your doctor will have for you. Reading about risks, complications, and difficult patient outcomes without understanding the full context can cause unnecessary worry. If you choose to use online resources to educate yourself, make sure you use trusted sources and ask your doctor for recommendations.

Some organizations that have partnered with the American Glaucoma Society include:

- National Eye Institute (NEI) at NEI.NIH.gov
- American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) at EyeSmart.org
- BrightFocus Foundation at BrightFocus.org, including “Glaucoma Chats” with AGS doctors
- Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) at Glaucoma.org

Every person is different, so talk with your doctor to see what is best for you.



For a PDF version of this handout, visit
americanglaucomasociety.net/patient-family-resources/patient-handouts-resources

5034 Thoroughbred Ln, Brentwood, TN 37027 501.367.8605 info@americanglaucomasociety.org



AMERICAN
GLAUCOMA
SOCIETY