

## **Glaucoma**

A disease affecting the optic nerve, the bundle of nerve fibres that transmit electrical impulses from visual stimuli to the brain, which is caused by a steady increase in intraocular pressure.

In the eye affected by glaucoma the flow of aqueous humour is obstructed, fluid builds up and intraocular pressure increases. After some time, compression of the optic nerve occurs resulting in damage and death of the nerve fibres and the progressive deterioration of the visual field. If the disease is left untreated it can lead to blindness.

The most common form of glaucoma (open-angle) is mostly asymptomatic. Indeed, it is often diagnosed by the ophthalmologist during a routine glasses check simply by measuring the pressure on the eye, which is must be done after the age of 40. Rare before this age, glaucoma becomes progressively more frequent. An element of heredity has been observed.

Treatment may consist in medication, to be taken for life, para-surgery (laser surgery) or surgery. The first is the most common, while the last two tend to be adopted only in the most serious cases.