

## Ocular Hypertension Referral under New NICE Guidance

You have been referred to the hospital because the pressure inside your eye(s) is high. This does not mean that there is anything wrong however you need to be checked to exclude a diagnosis of glaucoma. Glaucoma is high pressure inside the eye compressing the nerve at the back of the eye causing damage to your peripheral vision. It is important to realise that even if you do have glaucoma it is eminently treatable and very very few people lose any vision due to glaucoma anymore. We catch it so early that with appropriate management your eye condition will not change at all and you will never lose any vision.

Previously your optometrist would have kept a regular check on your condition however the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has recently released guidance aiming to improve the care of glaucoma patients across the whole NHS. They are recommending that you are checked at the hospital if your pressure is high to ensure that we catch glaucoma even earlier.

Your optometrist is reasonably confident that you do not have a significant problem however it is prudent that you are checked by the hospital.

Sometimes the equipment your optometrist uses to measure the pressure in the eye can overestimate the true pressure in the eye. Whereas previously your optometrist has been able to factor this into their decision making, now they have to make their decisions purely based on pressure they get.

You will be examined in the hospital and have your pressure checked by a different (more accurate) technique. You will also have the drainage angle of the eye assessed and your optic nerve (at the back of the eye) checked. If your pressure is normal (as it often is) you may be discharged at the first visit. If your pressure is high then you will probably be followed up for a few years until we are confident that the pressure is not causing any damage (this condition is called ocular hypertension – high pressure numerically but no glaucoma). When we are happy we will send you back to the capable hands of your optometrist. You should see them regularly and if they detect any change or are at all concerned they can refer you back to the hospital.

Written by Mr Amar Alwitary, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon

These patient information sheets are written for general guidance and are not intended to replace a formal consultation. Each case should be judged on individual merits.

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