

Eyelights

March 2025



**What does
glaucoma
look like?**

**Your Glaucoma
Awareness Month**

Cataracts and glaucoma

GLAUCOMA NZ
TO SAVE SIGHT

Take the 2-minute challenge.

GNZ Ambassador and Broadcaster Patrick Gower urges New Zealanders to do the 2-minute challenge.

You have the power to save sight

Thank you for your support as part of our incredible Glaucoma NZ community.

2025 comes packed with opportunity. Especially in March with New Zealand's annual Glaucoma Awareness Month. In this month we're asking a simple but powerful question: "What does glaucoma look like?"

In your Eyalights, you'll find out how to get your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues involved. Particularly through the 2-minute challenge. Taking just two minutes, it's sure to create discussion, understanding and motivation to get an eye health check.

You have the power to save sight through spreading awareness. Please share your knowledge of glaucoma, order your free challenge pack or donate. Glaucoma looks different for everyone and it's up to us to help people see what that could look like.

Thank you to Glaucoma NZ members Betty, John and Trish for telling their stories. And to Dr. Baswati Sahoo for her expertise. We're proud to have members who willingly share and connect.

In New Zealand, glaucoma is the #1 cause of preventable blindness, yet far too many people remain unaware of the risks. March is your opportunity to get in the habit of sharing your knowledge of glaucoma and the importance of regular eye health checks. An early diagnosis will save sight.

You're the reason Glaucoma NZ exists. You believe in a world where no Kiwi goes blind from glaucoma. And with your continued support, this will become our reality. You have the power to save sight.

Warm regards,

Pippa



Create your legacy of love



Can you imagine leaving a gift that makes a difference long after you're gone? A gift that speaks of love, hope, and helping others?

This is the legacy that Roy and Betty planned. Their shared compassion and generosity will continue to help others long past their life together. It's because of a gift in their *Last Will and Testament*.

Betty gives her late husband Roy all the credit for the gift to Glaucoma NZ in their Wills. Roy didn't have glaucoma. But he witnessed his wife living with the eye disease and wanted to make a difference.

Betty was in her late 40s when she noticed vision difficulties. Glaucoma was in her family. But she never thought it would affect her. "I didn't think I would get it. I knew it was hereditary and thought it wouldn't affect me, but it did," she reflects. Her optometrist quickly referred her to an eye specialist, providing reassurance and prompt care.

Roy had watched as Betty put in eye drops, attended regular appointments, had eye surgery, and more. He understood her challenges and decided to act. He helped to establish a support network for locals living with glaucoma. And he arranged a gift to Glaucoma NZ in his Will.

Planning a Gift in Will to Glaucoma NZ was more than a charitable act. It expressed Roy's love for Betty and his commitment to others.

Inspired by Roy, Betty chose to do the same. Her children are aware of both gifts and Betty's proud that the gifts will enable glaucoma research and spread awareness of glaucoma to more people.

These planned gifts are a testament to their enduring love. Their shared legacy will continue to touch lives, spreading hope and support for generations.

Your family and loved ones should come first when planning your Will. After you provide for them, you may wish to leave a gift to Glaucoma NZ like Roy and Betty.

You can create your own online Will today, at no cost, using Glaucoma NZ's page on the website 'Gathered Here'. Go online to wills.gatheredhere.com/nz/c/glaucomanz

Your generosity moves clinical trial forward

Thanks to your generosity and belief in research, the clinical trial investigating preservative-free glaucoma drops is officially moving forward.

For Trish Windle in Invercargill, this progress is more than an announcement, it's personal.

"I'm rapt to hear the clinical trial is going ahead. I have very dry eyes and drive five

hours to Wanaka for dry eye treatment. Preservatives in drops are a big factor in this."

Trish switched to preservative-free eye drops late last year.

"I asked my specialist in Christchurch if I could get some preservative-free glaucoma drops. He said he'd do it because he knew I (continued pg 7)

John Knox: What does glaucoma look like?

John tests the 2-minute challenge.



If you ask John what glaucoma looks like, he'd probably tell you it looks like a chipped cup, a bumped shoulder, or a streaky plate he swore was clean. It looks like years of thinking, *my eyesight's fine—why go to the optometrist?* And it looks like the shock of being told, out of nowhere, you have glaucoma—a shock so big, he fainted.

“I knew nothing about glaucoma beforehand. Absolutely nothing,” John says. “No symptoms whatsoever. I noticed nothing.” His right eye had slowly adjusted over time, compensating for the vision loss in his left. He didn't realise anything was wrong—until it was.

John now has a matter-of-fact attitude about his diagnosis. He puts this down to his farming upbringing, along with his staunch Irish and Scots blood. “I don't really have any anger or any frustrations about the fact that I've got it, I've got it. Let's just suck it up and get on with life”.

Quirks of Living with Glaucoma

For John, glaucoma isn't just a medical condition—it's a series of small, unexpected challenges woven into everyday life.



John with wife Anne.

Take the dishes, for example. “When I'm washing dishes, my wife would say, ‘you haven't washed that dish properly’...to me it looks clean”. Reduced contrast sensitivity due to glaucoma means John can't see it! The solution? A dishwasher. Less arguing, cleaner dishes.

But then there's more.

“I'll be stacking dishes in the pantry, and I'll miss the edge of another plate—BONK! A little chip comes out. Or I'll set a cup down on the bench, and it'll clatter and crack.”

Navigating crowds can be tricky. “I go to the left and—whoops!—I bump into somebody. I didn't notice they're there.” Driving took some adjusting too. “I've got to make a conscious effort to look and turn my head to the left, rather than rely on the peripheral vision.”

Getting Caught Out

John never thought much about eye health checks. “For about 20 years I reckon I didn't go to an optometrist. Because my eyesight was fine”. That's how glaucoma sneaks up on people. “I didn't realise there were other things that could be going wrong with my eyes.”

Your People

Now, he's making sure others don't get caught the same way. Thinking back to telling past colleagues, John says

“I needed to get this information out because I didn't know about it, and I got caught. I didn't want anybody else to get caught”.

When he told his family about his diagnosis, their reaction was immediate: “Oh gee, perhaps I better go and get my eyes tested.”

This is the reaction John hopes to garner from the New Zealand public.

“Get your eyes tested on a regular basis and look after your eyesight” says John. Book in with your local optometrist to get an eye health check today.



What Does Glaucoma Look Like for you?

Everyone's experience of glaucoma is **different**, but if you have it, you probably have your own version of John's chipped cups and bumped shoulders.

The more people understand what glaucoma actually looks like, the more likely they are to take it seriously.

With this, Glaucoma NZ now has an interactive tool to help you spark conversations about glaucoma: **The 2-minute challenge**.

Glaucoma NZ has worked alongside trusted eye specialists to design a set of three **glaucoma simulation glasses**. Each set represents three stages of glaucoma ranging from early-onset to advanced.

Because glaucoma presents differently in everyone, these simulation glasses can't show you exactly how glaucoma would look for you. But they are useful to give you, your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues a tiny glimpse of what glaucoma can look like.

As you learned from John, glaucoma can mean a series of small, unexpected challenges woven into everyday life.

The 2-minute challenge is simple. **Wear our glaucoma simulation glasses for just two minutes of your day.** This could be as you walk your dog, make a sandwich or scroll on your phone.

Will you give it a go? Share your experience—whether it's over a cuppa, at work, or with everyone who'll listen. You know that the impact of glaucoma is more than what you can or cannot see. It impacts how you move, your mental well-being and your relationships.

You never know who might realise it's time for their own eye health check.

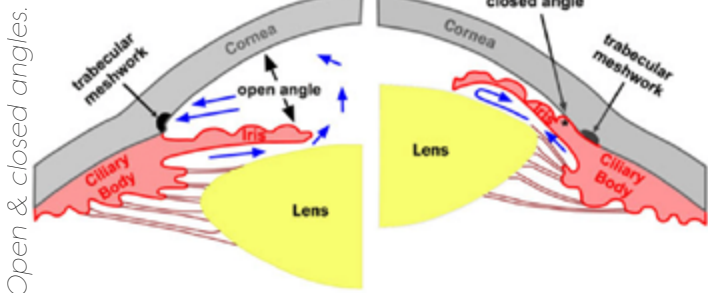
Go to glaucoma.org.nz to request your challenge pack of simulation glasses. Let your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues see what glaucoma looks like.

Dr Baswati Sahoo: Cataract Surgery in Glaucoma

Can someone have both cataracts and glaucoma?

Cataracts and Glaucoma often coexist in the elderly population and have a huge impact on their quality of life. Visual Impairment caused by cataracts or glaucoma has been associated with self-reported difficulties in physical function, emotional distress, and low socialization. While glaucoma causes irreversible peripheral vision loss, the central vision is often preserved until very advanced stages. A coexisting cataract affects this central vision. Cataract surgery enhances not just central vision but also clarifies the peripheral visual field for patients with glaucoma, ultimately improving their overall quality of life.

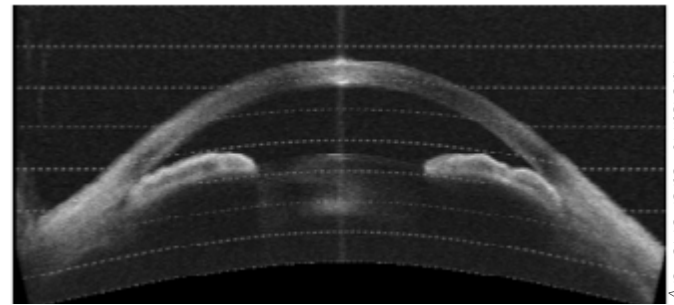
How do cataracts and glaucoma interact?



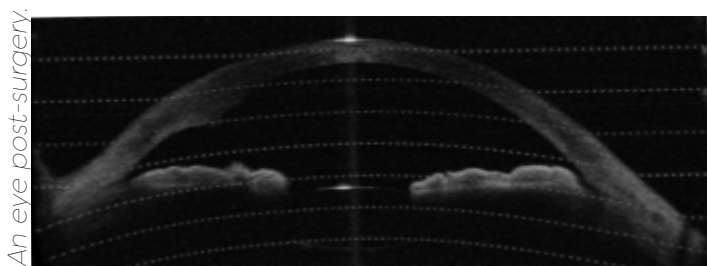
Glaucoma can be classified into open or closed angles based on the width of the anterior chamber angle in the eye. A cataract refers to the clouding of the eye's natural lens. As it progresses, the cataract may begin to exert pressure on the iris, resulting in a narrowing of the anterior chamber angle, which could heighten the risk of angle-closure glaucoma, particularly in those who are already vulnerable to this issue. Essentially, the enlarged lens occupies more space in the eye, diminishing the area between the iris and cornea at the

location where aqueous humor drains. This is important because aqueous humor must drain to maintain an optimum level of pressure within the eye. Pressure levels that are too high can cause irreversible glaucoma damage.

How can cataract surgery affect my glaucoma?



Cataract surgery entails replacing the clouded lens with a clear artificial one. Numerous studies show a moderate and lasting reduction in intraocular pressure (IOP) in patients with primary open-angle glaucoma and ocular hypertension after undergoing cataract surgery. IOP reductions tend to be more significant in patients with angle-closure glaucoma compared to those with open angles. One proposed explanation is that transitioning from a narrower angle with a naturally thicker lens (phakic angle), to a more open angle with an artificial, thinner lens (pseudophakic angle) enhances aqueous outflow.¹ Another theory suggests that the tissue that drains fluid out of the eye (trabecular meshwork) expands.² Johnstone et al. suggested that the aqueous outflow system functions like a mechanical pump. In glaucoma-affected eyes, this pump's effectiveness diminishes due to the contact between the stiffening of the trabecular tissue and the walls of the channel (Schlemm's canal) that collects and delivers aqueous humor into the bloodstream.³ Poley et al. suggested that cataract extraction improves this mechanical pump function.⁴



Is cataract surgery painful? Would I still need my glaucoma drops?

Phacoemulsification is the most common and advanced technique for cataract removal. This is a gentle eye surgery that eliminates cataracts and substitutes them with a synthetic lens. It can be conducted using topical or local anesthesia, ensuring that the procedure is both safe and pain-free. While cataract surgery can lead to a decrease in IOP, the necessity for glaucoma medication after the surgery is contingent upon the severity of glaucoma and the desired IOP for the eye.

Additionally, minimally invasive glaucoma procedures, such as iStents and KDB glides, can be performed alongside cataract surgery, which may lessen the requirement for glaucoma drops.

Performing cataract surgery early in patients with glaucoma not only enhances their vision but also aids in more effective management of glaucoma. This

approach should be recommended by all ophthalmologists.

References:

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Dr Baswati Sahoo is the Clinical Lead and a Consultant

Ophthalmologist at Hawkes Bay Hospital. She is also a Refractive Cataract and glaucoma Surgeon at Eye Institute, Hawkes Bay.



(continued from pg 1) was having dry eye treatment...Just so people are aware, you can go and get these things but you'll have to pay for it."

Now, thanks to your generosity, this clinical trial can aim to help people like Trish. Like you, we believe New Zealanders shouldn't need to make special arrangements to acquire preservative-free drops. Or shoulder the \$91 cost of a three-month prescription like Trish does.

Thank you for allowing this clinical trial to proceed. Thank you for paving the way for groundbreaking research. Thank you

for helping to build irrefutable proof to pressure Pharmac to fund preservative-free glaucoma drops.

As we look to the future, we remain deeply grateful to each of you who made this possible. Together, we are advancing research and building a healthier future for every Kiwi facing eye health challenges.

From Trish, and from all of us, thank you for your compassion, generosity, and unwavering support. Your kindness is changing lives.

Stay up to date at www.glaucoma.org.nz

Three easy ways that you can get involved with Glaucoma Awareness Month 2025

1. Encourage your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours aged 40+ to head to their local optometrist for an eye health test.

If they say, "oh, I can see fine", then you must reply with, "Glaucoma can steal your sight without your knowledge because it often has no symptoms before diagnosis".

If you or family members have glaucoma, then add, "You are at a significantly greater risk of developing glaucoma because it's in our family".

2. Request a 2-minute challenge pack and share your experience of what glaucoma looks like with your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

If you want to take your challenge to the next level, create a fundraising page to support Glaucoma NZ, organising a fun event with friends and family.

3. Donate now to enable New Zealand-based glaucoma research, provide support and education for New Zealanders affected by glaucoma and to raise vital awareness.



John wants you to take the 2-min challenge.



glaucomanz.raiseysite.com



Patrick 'Paddy' Gower.

"Find out what glaucoma looks like for you. Take the 2-minute challenge. Go to glaucoma.org.nz now".

Glaucoma NZ is a registered charitable trust (No. CC21421) that receives no government funding. Education resources and support programmes are free thanks to the generosity of Glaucoma NZ members. Donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible. Donate online at glaucoma.org.nz today.

Glaucoma New Zealand | Department of Ophthalmology The University of Auckland Private Bag 92019 Auckland 1142
FREEPHONE 0800 GLAUCOMA (452 826) | info@glaucoma.org.nz | www.glaucoma.org.nz

Join in and say 'Thank You' to funders

Sincere gratitude goes to the following Trusts & Foundations. Alongside you, they have funded patient support, glaucoma awareness and education in the community.

ANZ NZ Staff Foundation • ARA Lodge 348 IC • Blue Sky Community Trust • Blue Waters Community Trust • Community Organisation Grant Scheme • Lion Foundation • Lottery NZ • Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust • New Zealand Optical Wholesalers Association Inc • AD Hally Trust, St Joans Trust, South Canterbury A & R Edgar Trusts & Wilks Charitable Trust proudly managed by Perpetual Guardian Trust • Pub Charity • Trillian Trust • Trusts Community Foundation

You can support people affected by glaucoma with your family, work or community trust. Contact Glaucoma NZ on 0800 452 826.