

**I have had glaucoma for five years. I have been taking eye drops and my doctor tells me my pressure and control of my glaucoma are good. I recently acquired new glasses, but I am still having difficulty with reading and I bump into objects when I walk, especially at night. What can I do?**

First of all, I commend your desire to seek solutions. The unfortunate reality is that many patients do not express their decreased capability to perform normal activities of daily living to their families, friends or colleagues because of their frustration or lack of knowledge. This can often lead to withdrawal from common social activities and a diminished quality of life. Because of this, it is essential to understand the implications of glaucoma and the importance of control of the disease.

Adverse affects of long-term uncontrolled glaucoma (several types of glaucoma including normal or low tension glaucoma, open angle glaucoma or angle closure glaucoma) can compromise enjoyment in many daily tasks such as reading, hobbies, work, sports and driving. The negative impact of glaucoma on everyday life can occur, even if your pressure is considered “good” by your doctor. Although eye drops can lower your pressure, they do not cure the disease. The drops merely treat the glaucoma to slow the progression of the disease, so you may still experience difficulties in many activities.

This may be due to the slowly decreasing peripheral and/or central vision, resulting in the inability to see normal print, function well in poorly lit conditions or environments, travel safely in a known or unknown location or drive with confidence.

There is no magical number relating to visual acuity that applies when the level of vision may be a compromising factor in performing any everyday task. It is important to understand that with today’s technology and an interdisciplinary vision rehabilitation team, most goals are possible and vision rehabilitation should be sought when difficulties arise.

First and foremost, you need to clearly understand the treatment and management status provided by your eye care practitioner and if you do not, you need to discuss what their goal is for you.

Having said that, if you are still having difficulty, you may want to talk to your practitioner about referral for vision rehabilitation. An evaluation by a vision rehabilitation team consisting of a vision rehabilitation practitioner (optometrist or an ophthalmologist), an occupational therapist and an orientation & mobility specialist in the same clinical environment, may dramatically and expeditiously accomplish improvement in visual function and while providing patient education about resources, therapeutic interventions and environmental adaptations along with enhancing quality of life.

It is very likely that filters would help you with contrast issues, glare and night vision. Other optical devices may assist you in basic activities of your daily life. I encourage you to talk with your eye doctor and ask for a referral for low vision rehabilitation with a team who can work together to help you remain as independent as possible in everyday life.