



The Charity for People with Glaucoma
Established 1974

Can you see to drive?

National Glaucoma Awareness Week, 8-14 June 2015

This year's National Glaucoma Awareness Week will take place on the 8 - 14 June 2015. The focus will be on driving and encouraging people to have regular eye health checks to ensure that they are safe to drive. It is only with regular eye health checks through a local optometrist (optician), that people will know if their driving vision is affected. This is particularly important with glaucoma, as it has no symptoms in the early stages. But, with early detection and continued treatment people will often retain useful sight for life and be safe to drive for many years.

Driving and our ability and safety to do so, is something that many people take for granted. Yet, how many people have a regular eye health check to ensure that their vision is accurate? Even if a person can see a number plate at 20 metres, how many have been tested for glaucoma which affects vision?

There is an estimated 600,000 people with glaucoma in the UK, but 300,000 are undiagnosed. As there are no early symptoms it is vital that people over the age of 40 have regular eye health checks every one or two years. Advanced glaucoma leads to serious loss of sight.

Comments Russell Young, CEO of the International Glaucoma Association "the majority of us wouldn't take our cars on the road without an annual service and MOT yet, we are happy to put ourselves behind the wheel without knowing if we can see safely to drive. A visit to the optometrist will quickly check our safety and detect if there is any risk of glaucoma. Glaucoma is a complex condition, in that the brain fills in what the eyes cannot see. Many people will insist their vision is perfectly normal even when there is significant loss of vision".

"Around 10 per cent of the calls we receive to our helpline are from people worried about whether their glaucoma is going to affect their ability to drive. Yet the majority of those that report to the DVLA will not need further tests, and of those that do most will be found safe to drive", Young continues.

Glaucoma causes misty, patchy or blurred vision in places. It can cause people to miss the unexpected such as a person crossing the road, a cyclist passing, or a vehicle merging

International Glaucoma Association,
Woodcote House, 15 Highpoint Business Village, Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH
Administration: 01233 64 81 64 • Email: info@iga.org.uk
Charity registered in England & Wales No. 274681 and in Scotland No. SC041550

into traffic. The only way to know for sure about your vision and your safety on the roads is to have regular eye health checks every one to two years, particularly if you are over the age of 40.

“It is important people know if they do have glaucoma that has caused damage to vision in both eyes, they are required by law to report their condition to the DVLA. If they fail to do so they can face a criminal conviction, a fine up to £1000 and may be uninsured to drive. The good news about glaucoma is with ongoing treatment people can protect their vision and most people will retain useful sight for life”, Young concludes.

Further information about glaucoma and driving can be found on the IGA website, www.glaucoma-association.com or via the Sightline (helpline) on 01233 64 81 70.

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For further information about the week, please write to Karen Brewer (by post or email k.brewer@iga.org.uk, or phone 01233 64 81 69.

Notes for editors:

For further information or to interview an IGA spokesperson, please contact: Karen Brewer, Head of Marketing and PR on 01233 64 81 69 or email marketing@iga.org.uk

About the International Glaucoma Association:

1. The International Glaucoma Association (IGA) is the charity for people with glaucoma, with the mission to raise awareness of glaucoma, promote research related to early diagnosis and treatment, and to provide support to patients and all those who care for them. For more information, please visit www.glaucoma-association.org.uk
2. Set up in 1974, it is the oldest patient based glaucoma association in the world and it is a Charity Registered in Scotland and also England & Wales.
3. As part of its support services, it operates the IGA Sightline (helpline) and provides free information on any aspect of glaucoma.
4. For more information about glaucoma, contact the International Glaucoma Association (IGA) Sightline on 01233 64 81 70 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5.00pm).