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Article sheds light on driving problems for glaucoma patients

Published on July 29, 2016 at 2:13 AM

Concerns about driving often come up with glaucoma and may be brought to the doctor's attention by the patient or a family member. Common complaints include glare, poor night vision and decreased contrast sensitivity.

Ideally, the patient will recognize problems with driving and limit themselves. Poor night vision is the most common reason people restrict their driving. Glaucoma usually occurs in the same age group as cataracts, thus both can affect the vision.

To have an unrestricted driver's license, the Department of Motor Vehicles requires visual acuity of at least 20/40 and a horizontal field of vision with both eyes open of at least 120 degrees. A special visual field test performed with both eyes open is required to assess the driving field of vision. (Visual acuity requirements may vary by state).

Various studies have identified different problems associated with moderate peripheral visual field loss from glaucoma. People with visual field loss from glaucoma may be slower to anticipate and respond to changes in road conditions. They may also have more difficulty matching speed when changing lanes and keeping in their lane especially when navigating curves in the road. A recent study found that some areas of visual field loss may be more associated with driving problems than others (specifically, the left-hand portion of the visual field).

To have the best driving vision, it is important to keep your eyeglass prescription up to date in order to have the sharpest vision possible. Anti-reflective coatings and amber tinted lenses can help decrease glare and improve contrast with both day and night vision. Driver training courses are available at many rehabilitation centers that can teach the driver techniques to improve their skills.

The fear of losing one's driver's license and independence may be scary, but safety is the most important goal.

Source:

Glaucoma Research Foundation
