



What's New in Ophthalmology Today?

Glaucoma and Pillows

Glaucoma, a disease of the eye caused by death of the nerve fibers, and is associated with increased pressure in the eye. The treatment for this disorder is primarily aimed at lowering that pressure. Many kinds of ophthalmic drops are used to accomplish this goal; sometimes systemic medications, laser surgery and glaucoma surgery must be utilized. Dr. H. Ahmed and Dr. Tariq Alasbali reported at the 2009 meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology on a very interesting way for patients to significantly lower their intraocular pressure while sleeping – **sleep with your head raised on two or three pillows.** *Simple.* Patients intraocular pressures were measured when laying flat and were found to increase significantly. When their heads were elevated 30 degrees (equivalent to two pillows) or 45 degrees (3 pillows) their intraocular pressure was lowered significantly. Dr. Habeeb Ahmad of the State University of New York, Downstate noted, “In glaucomatous eyes, which may be exquisitely sensitive to even mild elevations in intraocular pressure, the hours spent in the supine position (laying flat) while sleeping may represent a period of increased progression of optic nerve damage.” His patients noted a 10-15% reduction in their pressure when tested at 45 degrees – *3 pillows.* Dr. Tariq Alasbali, at the University of Toronto reported his study that patients’ pressures were lowered by 20% in 1/3 of his study patients. **Accomplishing a 20% decrease in pressure during the night is very significant.** We spend a third of our lives in this position. Further large scale studies need to be done but these results are very **important and exciting** and are detailed in the journal EYEWORLD, 9/2009.

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