

## - Vision disorders

### Beware risk of obesity leading to loss of vision through glaucoma

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World Glaucoma Week was observed recently – from March 7 to 13. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness globally, yet many people are unaware that they could be at risk of getting this “silent thief of sight”.

Apart from seniors and people with a family history of the condition, those with obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), who experience disrupted breathing while sleeping, are about 10 times more likely to develop glaucoma.

The cause is believed to be related to poor blood flow and decreased oxygen delivery to the optic nerve.

OSA is most common in people who are overweight or obese – about 60 per cent to 90 per cent of adults with OSA are overweight.

For example, weight gain of 10 per cent is associated with a sixfold increase in OSA risk.

Excess weight leads to fat deposits in a person’s neck, which can block a person’s upper airway during sleep.

Increased abdominal girth from excess fat can also compress a person’s chest wall, decreasing lung volume. This reduced lung capacity diminishes airflow, making the upper airway more likely to collapse during sleep.

According to the National Population Health Survey, in 2017, 36.2 per cent of Singapore residents aged 18 to 69 were overweight or obese. This figure of almost four in 10 is not insignificant in our population.

OSA is already associated with health risks like high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

As loss of vision due to glaucoma is irreversible, we need to educate people that being overweight is not just a body image issue, but also a serious health hazard that puts them at risk of getting the condition.