

GENERAL INFORMATION

# RETINAL CONDITIONS



vision  
eye institute

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# WHAT ARE RETINAL CONDITIONS?

**Retinal conditions affect the light-sensitive tissue at the back of eye known as the retina. They include diseases that affect the part of the retina responsible for central vision (the macula) and the gel that sits in front of the retina (the vitreous).**

The retina acts like the film of a camera, sending information about shapes, colours, patterns and movement via the optic nerve to the brain, where the information is processed into the final image that we see.

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## DAMAGE TO THE RETINA CAUSES VISUAL DISTURBANCES OR LOSS OF VISION.

### What are the symptoms of a retinal condition?

Symptoms vary depending on the exact condition, for example:

- Sudden loss of vision (retinal vein occlusion, diabetic retinopathy)\*
- Flashing lights (retinal tear, retinal detachment)\*
- Shadow-like objects in your field of view (retinal detachment, diabetic retinopathy, eye floaters)\*
- Blurring or distortion of central vision (epiretinal membrane, macular degeneration)
- Tunnel vision or poor night vision (retinitis pigmentosa).

\* Seek urgent care if you experience this

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# WHAT ARE TYPES OF RETINAL CONDITIONS?

## MACULAR DEGENERATION

A group of degenerative diseases of the macula that cause loss of central and fine-detail vision. Treatment to stop or slow the progression of the wet form includes eye injections and photodynamic therapy. For some people with late 'dry' macular degeneration (geographic atrophy), a newer injection treatment can slow progression. It does not restore vision and is suitable only for selected patients. Your retinal specialist will advise on eligibility and access.

## DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

An eye disease caused by the persistently high blood sugar levels that occur with diabetes. Depending on the stage of disease, treatment includes eye injections, retinal laser treatment and vitrectomy surgery (keyhole surgery to remove the vitreous). The most advanced stage of the disease is an ocular emergency that can cause total vision loss.

## RETINAL VEIN OCCLUSION

Vision loss that occurs when the veins in the retina are blocked and the build-up of pressure causes smaller downstream blood vessels to leak. The blockage can occur in a smaller branch retinal vein with vision loss restricted to part of the visual field (branch vein retinal occlusion) or a central vein with the entire visual field affected (central vein retinal occlusion).

## RETINAL DETACHMENT

A serious condition in which the retina lining the back of the eye separates from the wall of the eye. If untreated, it can lead to permanent blindness. Surgery is usually needed to reattach the retina.

## RETINAL TEAR

A tear in the retinal tissue that is not usually as serious as a retinal detachment but can develop into a retinal detachment if untreated. Retinal laser treatment is effective for retinal tears.



## MACULAR HOLE

A small hole in the macula caused by the age-related shrinkage of the vitreous, which pulls on the macula. The first sign is usually blurring or distortion of central vision. A vitrectomy surgery is usually needed to improve vision.

## RETINITIS PIGMENTOSA

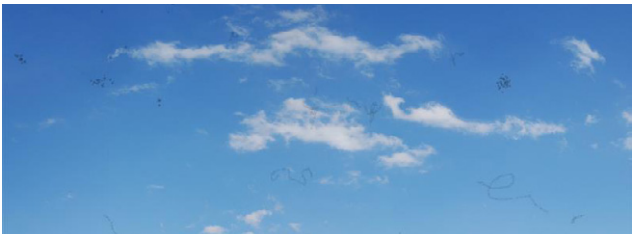
A group of genetic diseases that damage the retinal rod and/or cone cells (photoreceptors which are responsible for detecting light), causing vision loss. Although most forms of the condition are not treatable, gene therapy has recently been shown to benefit some patients with specific disease mutations.

## EPIRETINAL MEMBRANE (MACULAR PUCKER)

A thin sheet of scar-like tissue that grows on the surface of the macula and interferes with central vision. Your doctor will monitor progression using an OCT scan. Vitrectomy surgery may be recommended to prevent vision loss.

## EYE FLOATERS

Specks or smudges that float around your field of vision, caused by degeneration of the clear, jelly-like fluid that fills your eye (the vitreous). Most floaters are harmless, but they may also be a sign of more serious retinal conditions. New floaters should always be checked by an eye specialist. Laser treatment or vitrectomy surgery can be performed for severe floaters if they are affecting your quality of life.





# HOW ARE RETINAL CONDITIONS TREATED?

## Retinal laser treatment

The two most common diseases treated with laser are retinal tears and diabetic retinopathy. Laser treatment aims to lower the risk of further vision loss.

## Vitrectomy

Vitrectomy is keyhole surgery to remove the vitreous gel (the clear, jelly-like fluid inside your eye). Once the vitreous is removed, it is replaced with sterile saline or a temporary bubble of gas. Alternatively, silicone oil may be used if the retina has been detached for a long time or if retinal scarring is present.

The procedure may be needed to treat epiretinal membrane, vitreous haemorrhage, retinal detachment, macular hole, diabetic retinopathy or eye floaters. Most patients resume light activities within a day or so (individual recovery varies).

## Eye (intravitreal) injections

Eye injections are administered in the clinic or day surgery. The eye is numbed with a local anaesthetic to stop any pain. Ongoing treatment is often necessary for many retinal disorders.

- **Anti-VEGF injections** are used in the treatment of macular degeneration, retinal vein occlusion and diabetic retinopathy as well as many other conditions. Newer medicines allow longer time between injections for many patients, which can reduce the number of clinic visits.
- **Steroid injections** work by reducing inflammation caused by many retinal conditions, particularly those causing macular oedema (including diabetic retinopathy, central retinal vein occlusion and postoperative macular oedema).

## Other retinal treatments

- **Pneumatic retinopexy**
- **Cryo-buckle surgery**
- **Photodynamic therapy** is used in selected cases such as certain subtypes of 'wet' age-related macular degeneration, but is not required for most patients.

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CORNEAL CONDITIONS



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## OUR RETINAL CLINICS

For more information or to find a Vision Eye Institute clinic that treats retinal conditions, visit:

[visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/retinal-conditions](http://visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/retinal-conditions)

This information is general in nature. All medical and surgical procedures have potential benefits and risks. Consult your ophthalmologist for specific medical advice.



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