

This material will help you understand papilledema.

## **What is papilledema?**

Papilledema is swelling of the optic nerves that occurs in response to increased pressure in the head (i.e. increased intracranial pressure). The optic nerve carries images from your eye to your brain. The elevated pressure in the head pushes on the optic nerve and makes your optic nerve swell. You may have symptoms like headache or changes in vision. If left untreated, you may lose all or part of your vision.

## **What causes papilledema?**

The cause of papilledema is high pressure in the head. There are many conditions that may increase the pressure including:

- Increase in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), a clear fluid that covers the brain and spinal cord
- Decrease in CSF absorption
- Lesions like a brain tumor or hemorrhage (bleeding)
- Idiopathic intracranial hypertension (also called pseudotumor cerebri). Idiopathic means the cause is unknown.
- Viral or bacterial infection in the CSF (i.e. meningitis)
- Medications
- Genetic diseases

- Blood clot in the brain (dural venous sinus thrombosis)

### **How is papilledema diagnosed?**

Your eye doctor performs a complete exam of your eye and checks your visual field. Your doctor also want an OCT, MRI or CT scan. This helps determine the underlying cause of the increase in pressure in your brain. You may also have a spinal tap to check the pressure of your CSF.

### **How is papilledema treated?**

The treatment for papilledema depends on the cause. Treatment involves reducing the pressure in your brain. Your doctor may prescribe medicine or recommend surgery. Talk to your doctor about your treatment options.

**For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.**



[http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/eye\\_disorders/optic\\_nerve\\_disorders/papilledema.html](http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/eye_disorders/optic_nerve_disorders/papilledema.html)

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