

Retinopathy of Prematurity

This material will help you understand retinopathy of prematurity, its causes, and how it may be treated.

What is retinopathy of prematurity?

Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow on the retina of premature babies. The retina is the part of the eye that captures images and sends them to the brain. These damaged vessels may leak blood and cause retinal detachment. Mild cases of ROP will usually not affect the baby's vision. More advanced stages may lead to severe loss that can't be reversed.

What causes retinopathy of prematurity?

The blood vessels in the eye normally finish developing in the last few weeks before birth. If the baby is born too early, the blood vessels may not have had the chance to fully develop. This can lead to ROP as normal vessel growth may stop. The earlier the baby is born premature and the lower the birth weight, the higher the chance that the baby will develop ROP.

How is retinopathy of prematurity treated?

Mild stages of ROP do not require any treatment, but may require close follow-up. These cases typically improve on their own.

If the case is more severe, the eye doctor may use laser therapy or surgery to treat the abnormal retina. This treatment helps reduce the growth of abnormal vessels and may help prevent future problems.

Infants with ROP also have a higher risk of developing other eye problems later in life. Therefore, people who have had ROP should continue to see an eye doctor regularly.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/retinopathy.prematurity.html>



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/retinopathy-prematurity.cfm>

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