

This material will help you understand how vasculitis affects your eyes, its common causes, and treatment options.

## **What is vasculitis?**

Vasculitis refers to the inflammation of blood vessels. When these vessels become inflamed, they can become more narrow or close off. They can also become larger and leak more easily. This limits the blood flow, which can affect the function of certain organs.

In your eye, vasculitis can affect the blood vessels that nourish the retina. If your eye is like a camera, the retina is the layer in the back that acts like the “film.” It captures images and sends them to the brain. Vasculitis can impair blood flow. This leads to fluid leaking out of the vessels, causing the retina to become swollen. This prevents the retina from functioning as it should. It may lead to blurred vision or sudden vision loss.

## **What causes vasculitis?**

Inflammation is a normal part of the immune system. It is your body’s natural response to injury. It acts to heal the hurt areas of the body. Vasculitis occurs when your body’s immune system attacks blood vessels by mistake. Vasculitis that affects the blood vessels in the retina can either be the result of an infection in your eye or an inflammatory disease in another part of your body. Vasculitis is often related to other diseases that affect the immune system, such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.

## **How is vasculitis treated?**

Vasculitis is primarily treated with medications that help suppress the immune system. Your doctor will likely prescribe steroid eye drops or pills, which decrease the inflammation in your blood vessels and increase blood flow.

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



<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/vas/>

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