

Epiretinal Membrane

An epiretinal membrane is abnormal scar tissue that develops on the surface of the retina. The retina is a thin layer of tissue that lines the inside of the back of the eye. It picks up light and allows us to see. The center of the retina is called the macula. It allows the fine central vision that is used for reading or for driving a car.

When an epiretinal membrane grows over the macula, it can pull and drag the macula. This may cause blood vessels to leak fluid into the macula, resulting in blurred or distorted vision. It is not fully clear why some eyes develop an epiretinal membrane. As people age, the vitreous jelly that fills the eyes often separates from the retina. This separation may cause a microscopic, partial-thickness tear in the surface of the retina. Cells from the retina may grow from this tear over the surface of the retina and turn into scar tissue, an epiretinal membrane.

Studies have shown that most epiretinal membranes do not grow or cause progressive blurring or distortion of vision. However, about 10% of eyes with epiretinal membranes develop progressive reduction of vision. In eyes with poor vision caused by epiretinal membrane, surgical removal of the membrane often results in a significant improvement in vision. However, the vision usually does not return completely to normal, and in some eyes distortion may persist. The microsurgery required for removal of an epiretinal membrane is called ***vitreectomy***.

Surgery is recommended only for eyes with severe loss of vision. It is not recommended for eyes with only a mild reduction in vision.

If you notice progressive worsening of your vision, so that it is more blurred or distorted, please telephone our office and schedule a return visit for re-evaluation within approximately one month.

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