



## Retinal Vein Occlusion

Most people know high blood pressure and other vascular diseases pose risks to overall health, but many may not know that high blood pressure can affect vision by damaging veins in the retina. High blood pressure is the most common condition associated with Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion (BRVO). About 10 to 12 percent of the people who have BRVO also have glaucoma (high pressure in the eye).

Branch retinal vein occlusion blocks small veins in the retina, the layer of light-sensing cells at the back of the eye. If the blocked retinal veins are ones that nourish the macula, the part of the retina responsible for reading vision, some central vision is lost. During the course of vein occlusion, sixty percent of people will have swelling of the macula, the central vision area. In about one third of people, this macular swelling (edema) will remain for over one year without treatment.

BRVO causes a painless decrease in vision, resulting in misty, distorted vision, or bloody vision. If the veins cover a large area, new abnormal vessels may grow on the retinal surface, which can bleed into the eye and cause blurred vision.

Your eye doctor may recommend a period of observation, since hemorrhages and excess fluid may subside on their own. If the central retina is involved or abnormal blood vessels develop, your retina specialist will direct your treatment to help recover vision. Your eye care specialist will also order studies to identify the cause of the blockage in order to minimize the risk of a second event in the eye or elsewhere. If you have had a branch retinal vein occlusion, regular visits to your eye doctor are essential to protect vision.

Central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) blocks the main vein in the retina, the light-sensitive nerve layer at the back of the eye. The blockage causes the walls of the vein to leak blood and excess fluid into the retina. When this fluid collects in the macula-the area of the retina responsible for central vision-vision becomes blurry. Blotchy vision or intermittent loss of vision are other symptoms of CRVO. New floaters in your vision are another symptom of CRVO. When retinal blood vessels are not working properly, the retina grows new fragile vessels that leak blood into the vitreous, the fluid that fills the center of the eye. Blood in the vitreous clumps and is seen as tiny dark spots, or floaters, in the field of vision.

Retinal vein occlusions commonly occur with glaucoma, diabetes, vascular disease, high blood pressure, and blood disorders. Your eye doctor will try to determine the cause of the CRVO and prescribe a treatment plan to salvage your vision. A number of treatments may be appropriate and can often reverse the disease process sometimes restoring vision.