

Ophthalmology

Acquired Retinoschisis (Also known as degenerative or age-related retinoschisis)

This information aims to explain what this condition is and how it is managed.

What is acquired retinoschisis?

The retina is a layer of tissue at the back of the eye containing the nerves that receive light and send the light signals to the brain. The term retinoschisis means "splitting" of the layers of the retina. It is caused by small cysts that form in the side (periphery) of the retina and cause separation of the layers of the retina.

It is called "acquired", "degenerative" or "age-related" retinoschisis in order to distinguish from a genetic form of the disease usually present from childhood ("juvenile" or "x-linked" retinoschisis).

Although this condition has been reported in people as young as 20 years old, it mostly affects people over 40. Men and women are equally affected.

What are the symptoms?

The majority of people with this condition may not have any symptoms, and only discover that they have retinoschisis when having a full eye examination. Sometimes, patients notice a very subtle shadow in their side vision. If the area of splitting progresses, this usually happens very slowly and rarely goes far enough to cause symptoms.

Often, the retinoschisis does not progress at all, or may even disappear over time.

Rarely, the splitting may progress and result in detachment of the retina; in this case treatment may be offered.

In one study of elderly people with retinoschisis, the retinoschisis disappeared from 4 eyes out of 45 (8.8%) over a 14 year period.¹

In another study of 123 people (215 eyes) with retinoschisis who did not have symptoms, were followed up for between 1 and 21 years:²

- The retinoschisis extended towards the back of the eye in 7 eyes (3.2%). None reported new symptoms
- The retinoschisis extended around the edge of the eye in 14 eyes (6.4%)
- New areas of retinoschisis appeared in 22 eyes (10%)



Patient Information

- The retinoschisis disappeared in 5 eyes (2.3 %)
- No eye / patient experienced a retinal detachment that affected their vision

Treatment of acquired retinoschisis

No treatment is recommended due to the very low chance of retinoschisis seriously affecting your vision, and the possibility that it will disappear by itself.

Surgery is performed if a retinal detachment occurs that affects your vision. Fortunately this occurs very rarely.

Follow-up

Regular review in the eye clinic is **not** necessary for this condition.

If you experience any of these symptoms please attend Eye Casualty:

- Sudden development of floaters (dark spots), or an increase in their size or number
- Flashes of light
- A dark curtain moving up, down or across your vision.

Eye Casualty

University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire, Outpatients Department, **Clinic 9**

Monday - Thursday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Friday 8:30am – 4:00pm

Saturday 8:30am – 12:00 noon

Telephone: 024 7696 6627

Outside of these times, please attend the Accident & Emergency Department

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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References

¹ Buch H, Vinding T, Nielsen NV. Prevalence and Long-term Natural Course of Retinoschisis among Elderly Individuals : The Copenhagen City Eye Study. *Ophthalmology*. 2007, 114(4) pp.751–755

² Byer NE. Long-term natural history study of senile retinoschisis with implications for management. *Ophthalmology*. 1986, 93 pp.1127–1136