

# **Retinal Vein Occlusion**

## **Information for patients**

**Ophthalmology Services**

### **What is Retinal Vein Occlusion (RVO)?**

Retinal vein occlusion (RVO) is an obstruction of the retinal venous system in the eye. This blockage causes blood to collect in the vein resulting in swelling and bleeding into the surrounding tissue, affecting its ability to respond to light. It can lead to blindness in some patients if left untreated. If you have an RVO, you may notice a change in your sight which may range from dimming or blurring to complete loss of vision.

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**There are two forms of RVO:**

**Central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO):** is the blockage of the main retinal vein. The whole vision of that eye is affected.

**Branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO):** is the blockage of one of the smaller branch veins. It usually affects a smaller area of the eye and vision may not always be affected.

### **What causes RVO?**

The main associations of RVO can therefore be defined as risk factors for atherosclerosis, example include:

- Hypertension
- High cholesterol
- Peripheral vascular disease
- Diabetes and obesity
- Glaucoma
- Stroke

The remainder are conditions that cause hyper viscosity or slow or turbulent flow through retinal veins.

RVO mostly affects older people because these factors happen more frequently as we get older. To reduce the risk and prevent further development of RVO, it is important that all your risk factors are well controlled. In some cases, a cause is not found.

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## **What is likely to happen after I've been diagnosed with RVO?**

Your ophthalmologist will discuss the need for the treatment depending on whether you have developed any complications from the retinal vein occlusion. Treatment is not always needed at an early stage, but you will be monitored at an appropriate interval.

It is currently impossible to remove the blockage in the retinal vein. However, we could minimise the damaging effects of the blockage and prevent further risk of complications.

## **What are the complications of RVO?**

**The two main complications of RVO:**

**Macular Oedema:**

a blocked vein can cause fluid leakage into the macular area of the retina. The swelling of this area leads to difficulties recognising faces, reading, or watching TV with that eye. There are two main treatments for macular oedema:

## **Treatment:**

Anti-VEGF injections

- Anti-VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor) drugs work by reducing the leakiness of blood vessels and swelling in the macula
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- It is given as injections into the eye once a month for 3 months. Further injections might be required if they are needed.

#### Steroid injections

- Steroid is given in a form of an implant into the eye to control the swelling. It is slowly releasing the drug up to 6 months.

#### **New Vessel growth:**

About 1 in 5 patients with RVO develop new abnormal blood vessels (neovascularisation) in the eye. These blood vessels can easily leak, bleed, and raise the pressure in the eye resulting in a condition called glaucoma. It can be treated by appropriate laser treatment.

#### **Treatment:**

##### Laser treatment

- This option can be used to treat new vessel growth. The aim is to stabilize the condition and not to improve the vision.
  - Before the procedure, a local anaesthetic will be given to numb your eye as well as an eye drop to dilate the pupils.
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- A special contact lens will be placed to hold your eyelids open and allow a laser beam to be focused on your retina.
  - This treatment is usually not painful but you may feel sharp pricking sensation.

**Further Information and advice can be obtained from:**

**Maidstone Hospital Eye Clinic**

Monday to Friday 09:00am – 17:00pm

Telephone: 01622 226202

**Tunbridge Wells Hospital (Pembury) Eye Clinic**

**Answerphone** 01892 633877

Monday to Thursday 09:00am – 17:00pm

**Telephone:** 01892 633880


Friday 09:00am – 13:00pm

**Telephone:** 01892 634450

**For out of hours ring:** 01622 729000, ask for the on-call eye doctor or go to your nearest Emergency Department

**NHS 111** - Telephone 111

**NHS 111**  
**NHS Choices online**

 **111**  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



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## References:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions/retinal-vessel-occlusion>

This information leaflet is adapted from Royal National Institute of the Blind People (RNIB) and patient.info.

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**Telephone:** ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

**Email:** [mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net](mailto:mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net)

**or visit their office** at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

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