



Northern Eye

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Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion/Central 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 and arteries in the eye.

Branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO) 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 straight-ahead vision, some central vision is lost. During the course of vein occlusion, sixty percent or greater will have swelling of the central macular vision area. In about one third of people, this macular edema will remain for over one year. High blood pressure is the most common condition associated with BRVO. About 10 to 12 percent of the people who have BRVO also have glaucoma (high pressure in the eye).



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.

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.

In severe cases of CRVO, the blocked vein causes painful pressure in the eye. Retinal vein occlusions commonly occur with glaucoma, diabetes, age-related vascular disease, high blood pressure, and blood disorders.

There is no cure for BRVO or CRVO. Finding out what caused the blockage is the first step in treatment. Dr. Currier may recommend a period of observation, since hemorrhages and excess fluid may subside on their own. Depending on how damaged the veins are, laser surgery may help reduce the swelling and improve vision. Laser surgery may also shrink the abnormal new blood vessels that are at risk of bleeding. There is no guarantee vision will return to what it once was prior to an occlusion.

If you have had BRVO, CRVO, or have high blood pressure, regular visits with Dr. Currier are essential in protecting your vision.