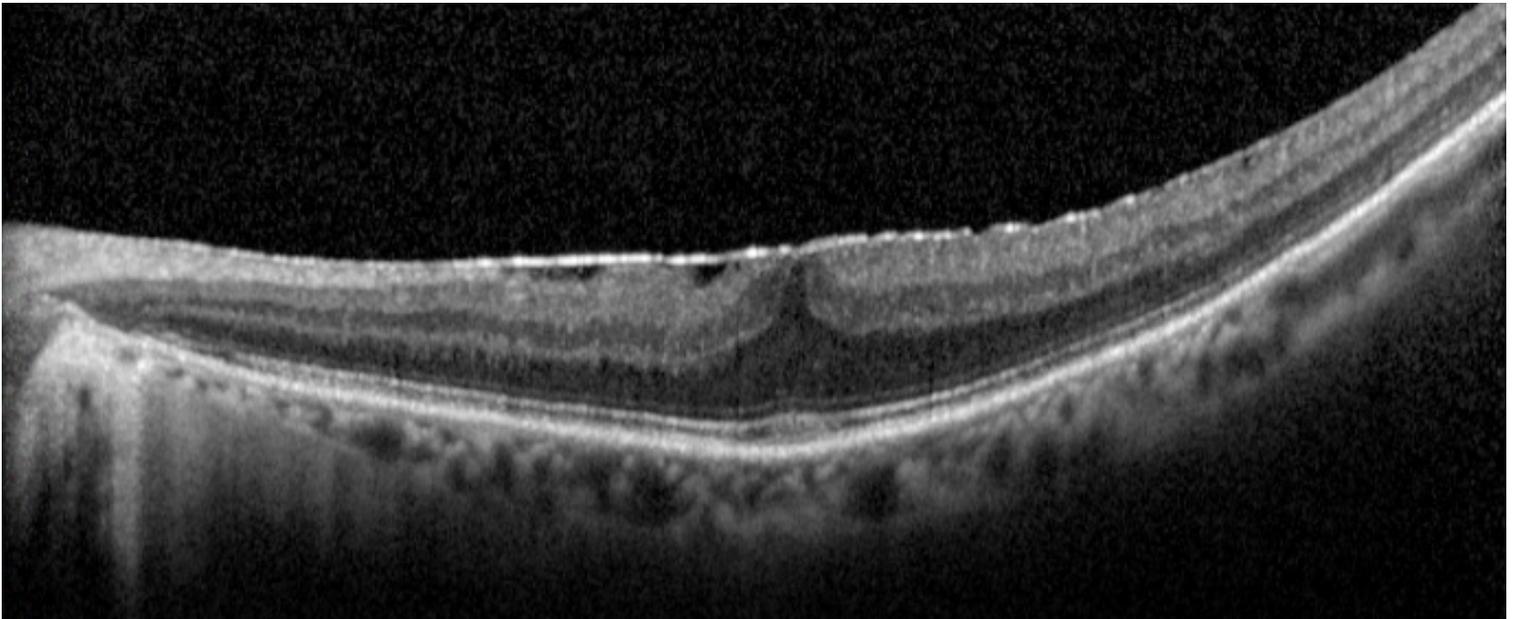




Epiretinal Membrane

What is an epiretinal membrane?

An epiretinal membrane is a layer of scar tissue that has formed on the macula, located in the center of the eye's light-sensitive tissue called the retina. The macula gives us our sharp, central vision which we use for reading, driving and seeing fine detail.



Symptoms of an epiretinal membrane

Symptoms of a macular hole are common to most central retinal conditions. The symptoms may be:

- Blurred central vision.
- Distorted or “wavy” images, especially straight lines.
- Difficulty reading or performing tasks that require fine detail.
- Gray area or dark spot in central vision.

Diagnosis of an epiretinal membrane

An epiretinal membrane is diagnosed by a dilated examination of the eye. A fluorescein angiogram may be undertaken to assist with the diagnosis and rule out any other retinal conditions. Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) imaging, which shows the layers of the retina is often used to identify the existence of an epiretinal membrane.

How is an epiretinal membrane treated?

Epiretinal membranes usually require no treatment. In most cases the symptoms described above are mild and they do not affect their daily life. Most epiretinal membranes do not progress. You will generally be reexamined in three to four months to check this.

On the rare occasions where epiretinal membranes cause visual disturbances that may affect daily life surgery is recommended. Epiretinal membranes are treated with a procedure known as a vitrectomy. In this procedure the vitreous gel is removed and the epiretinal membrane is then peeled from the retina. Surgery is performed under local anesthesia.

Risks of surgery

The most common risk after surgery is the increase in the rate of cataract development. In most patients the cataract develops rapidly and may become severe enough that it requires surgery. Other, less common risks may include infection or retinal detachment, both of which can be treated. Also for a few months after surgery patients are not allowed to travel by air. Changes in pressure may cause the increased pressure within the eye.