



Mercy Health
Care first

Your important health information

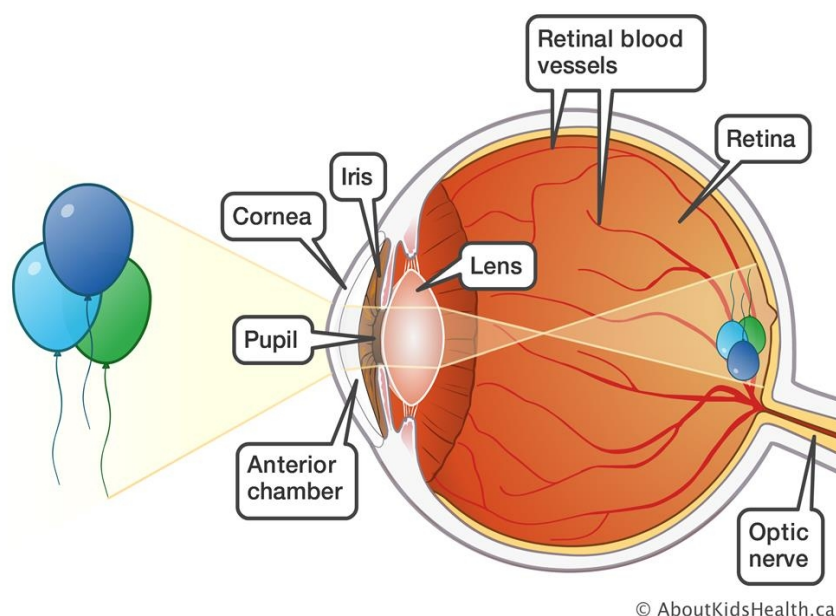
Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP)

What is retinopathy of prematurity (ROP)?

Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) is a common eye problem that may affect premature babies, that is those born at less than 30 weeks or less than 1250g birthweight.

Four out of five premature babies will have some mild ROP and usually won't require any treatment. However, if a baby has severe ROP and it is not treated, it can affect their eyesight and even cause blindness.

ROP is a condition which affects the retina. The retina is at the back of the eye. It detects light and allows us to see. Regular screening and early treatment are needed to prevent long term damage.



What causes retinopathy of prematurity (ROP)

- The blood vessels in the eye (develop late in the second trimester of pregnancy. When a baby is born early, the blood vessels may not be fully grown.
- When a premature baby is born, the blood vessels can begin to grow abnormally. This can form scar tissue which can cause damage to the retina.
- Babies who are born extremely early or who are extremely sick and need a higher amount of oxygen are at greater risk of ROP. However, some premature babies who have had no serious illness can still develop it.

When will my baby be screened?

- If your baby was born before 26 weeks, they will be screened when they are 30 – 31 weeks gestational age.
- If your baby was born after 26 weeks, they will be screened approximately four weeks after delivery
- The screening is done in the nurseries at the baby's bedside by the Retcam trained nurse.

What will happen during screening?

Your baby will receive eye drops before the eye exam to make their pupils larger.

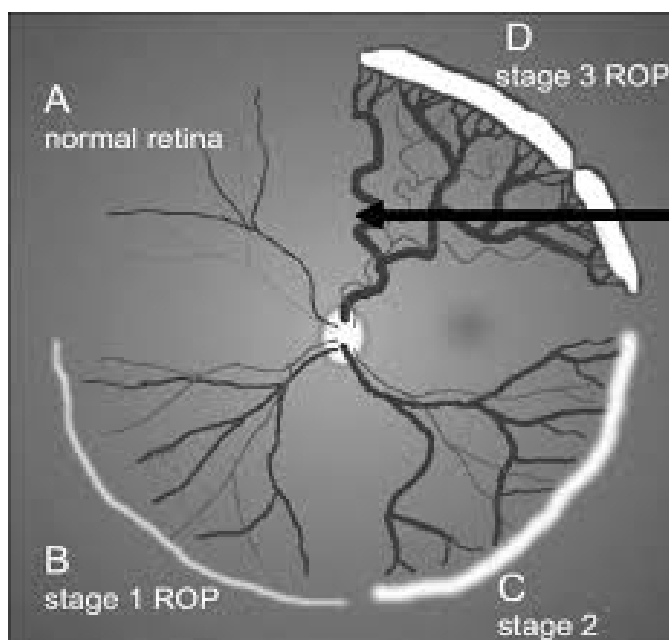
The Retcam nurse examine the eyes with a Retcam using a retractor to hold the eye open and get a better view of the retina.

The examination can be uncomfortable for your baby but we will give them some sucrose before the exam for pain relief. The exam will only take a few minutes and most babies settle again very quickly.

Stages and zones of retinopathy of prematurity

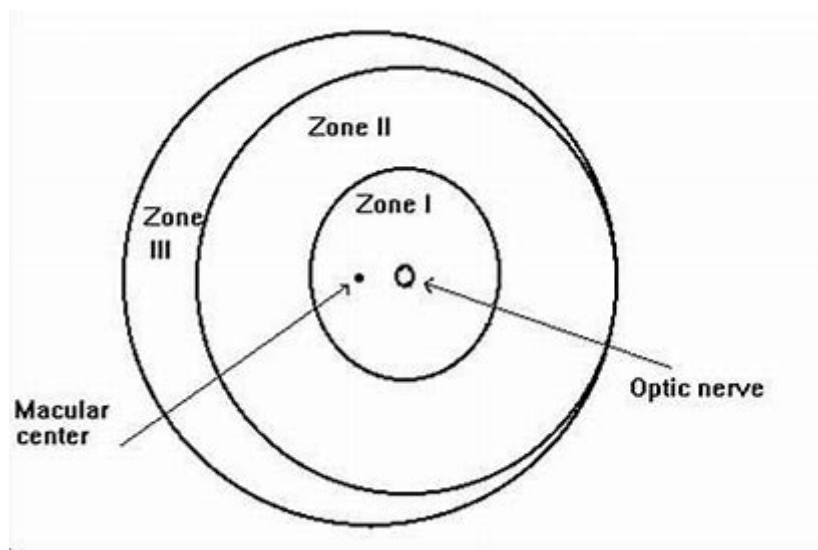
The ophthalmologist will review the pictures of the eye and document the ROP as follows:

- Stage 0** Normal growth (A on the picture)
- Stage 1** A fine white line is seen at the tips of the blood vessels (B on picture). The white line is the ROP.
- Stage 2** The white line gets thicker. (C on picture)
- Stage 3** The white line is much thicker because fine and/or abnormal new blood vessels are forming. (D on picture). The arteries look more wiggly (tortuous) and the veins look fatter. This is called plus disease and is a sign that treatment may be needed.



Zones

The retina is divided into three zones from the back to the front of the eye. Zones 1, 2 and 3. When the blood vessels reach zone 3, they are fully grown.



How will I know if my baby has ROP?

- The ophthalmologist will document your baby's progress at every eye screening visit and the nurse looking after your baby or the care manager can update you the same day of the exam.
- If it looks like your baby has severe ROP, the ophthalmologist will talk to you to explain about the possibility of treatment.
- If your baby requires treatment, they will be referred to a specialist hospital where this can be done by a team of ophthalmologists. In most cases up to 90% of the ROP disappears and vision loss is prevented.

Will my baby require more eye exams when they go home?

- Some babies will go home before their last eye screening. If this happens, we will arrange a time and day for you to bring your baby in for their screening.
- Follow up eye examinations after discharge are very important as they may prevent blindness. We will advise you when and where the follow up will be.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Mercy Hospital for Women

Neonatal Services
Phone: 03 8458 4685

Acknowledgements

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This document provides general information only and is not intended to replace advice about your health from a qualified practitioner. If you are concerned about your health, you should seek advice from a qualified practitioner.