

Columbus Ophthalmology Associates
CYSTOID MACULAR EDEMA

What is cystoid macular edema?

Despite the recent advances in cataract surgery and instrumentation, a condition called Cystoid Macular Edema (CME) remains the most common cause of decreased vision in cataract patients after surgery. Cystoid macular edema occurs when small amounts of protein leak from the vessels in the area known as the macula. The macula is the most critical portion of the retina and it is responsible for central vision as well as color vision. Several theories have been proposed as to why patients develop this condition, but the basic cause is intraocular inflammation due to the release of prostaglandins. This inflammation causes a breakdown in the wall of the blood vessels, which then leads to fluid accumulating under the macula.

The incidence of cystoid macular edema has decreased with modern surgery. However, studies show that this can occur anywhere from .3% to 3% of eyes undergoing cataract surgery. Typically, the edema occurs after uneventful small incision cataract surgery with intraocular lens implantation. Patients are usually doing well until about the four to six week period when there is a sudden decrease in vision. This condition can usually be spotted during the course of an examination by the operating surgeon. In certain cases, however, a special test called a fluorescein angiogram is necessary to detect subtle amounts of fluid beneath the macula.

What treatment is available?

Treatment of this condition is usually successful and involves the use of topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID's). These medications are used for an indefinite period until the fluid has resolved. In certain circumstances, patients will be placed on NSAID's before surgery to try and prevent inflammation as they may be at risk for developing cystoid macular edema. This includes, but is not limited to diabetics, patients with a history of ocular inflammation, or those who have had prior eye surgery.

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