

## Epiretinal Membrane

### **What is an Epiretinal Membrane?**

An epiretinal membrane is a very thin layer of scar tissue which forms on the surface of the retina in an area that is responsible for our central and most important vision. The part of the eye affected by an epiretinal membrane is called the macula. The macula is made up of special nerve cells that provide our sharp central vision needed for seeing fine detail (reading, driving, etc.). When an epiretinal membrane forms over the macula, it may contract and wrinkle the macula resulting in distorted and/or blurred vision.

### **Why do I have an Epiretinal Membrane?**

In most cases the development of an epiretinal membrane appears to be related to normal age related changes inside the eye. In some cases it can be related to conditions such as diabetes, retinal tears, blockage of blood vessels, inflammation or prior eye surgery. Epiretinal membranes are not related to macular degeneration. Epiretinal membranes do not usually affect the other eye. They are quite common and affect up to 10% of people in later years (60 years of age or older).

### **Assessment for an Epiretinal Membrane**

We are able to detect an epiretinal membrane during an eye examination. Sometimes, a special scan of the back of the eye (Optical Coherence Tomography) may be needed to confirm the presence of an epiretinal membrane. Your surgeon will assess your symptoms to help you decide whether you may benefit from surgery. The main symptoms that we look for when deciding to recommend surgery are blurring and distortion of vision that are interfering with your day-to-day activities.

If your symptoms are significant you may want to consider surgery to help maximize the vision in your affected eye. Surgery is the only way to treat an epiretinal membrane, there are no eye drops or medications that you can take that will help.

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