

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

Vision Problems

Overview

Vision problems occur in over 50% of all multiple sclerosis (MS) patients. These problems are often caused by inflammation of the optic nerve, which brings light and images from the eye to the brain. The most common vision problems are blurred vision, uncontrolled eye movements, and diplopia (also known as double vision). Vision problems are usually temporary, but in rare cases they can become permanent.

Three Common Types of Vision Problems

Optic Neuritis

- Results from the inflammation of the optic nerve
- May form a dark spot in the center of the eye, or cause fuzzy or gray vision
- Blurred vision may rarely lead to blindness in one eye

Nystagmus

- Causes uncontrolled eye movement
- May be mild, only occurring when the person looks to the side or may be severe enough to cause vision impairment

Diplopia

- Also known as double vision
- Weakness in the muscles that control eye movement causes the brain to see two images
- May increase as the eye becomes tired or is overused

Management

If a person develops vision problems because of an MS attack, the vision problems may get better with time or after treatment with steroids. However, not all vision problems are caused by attacks, so not all need to be treated with steroids. It is important for MS patients to find ways to manage vision problems caused by everyday eye use. Refer to the back of this handout for some helpful tips for dealing with vision problems caused by MS.

Review

Vision problems are one of the most common symptoms of MS. Many vision problems are caused by MS attacks, but may also occur from eye overuse. Most vision problems get better over time, but some may become permanent. Patients should speak to their neurologist if they notice a change in vision or have vision problems. A low-vision optometrist may be able to help MS patients deal with limited vision.

For questions or concerns regarding any of the above statements or recommendations, please feel free to contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430.

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Vision Problems *(continued)*

Tips for Dealing with Everyday Vision Problems

Many MS patients will deal with vision problems of one type or another during their lifetime. These tips will help patients prepare to face vision problems, and deal with problems as they occur.

If you develop vision problems:

- Let your neurologist know. Vision problems may be a sign of an MS attack that can be treated with steroids.
- See an eye doctor. If vision problems are permanent and not part of an attack, see a specialist. They can help MS patients manage permanent vision problems. A low-vision optometrist or a low-vision rehabilitation specialist is the best person to talk to.
- Explore other resources. All 50 states have offices for the blind and visually impaired. Patients with some sight left, or patients with symptoms that only happen some of the time, are often still eligible for benefits. See below for some useful contact information.
- Use the computer. If you have a home computer, programs exist that can magnify text, or read typed words back to you. Also, adjusting your monitor's brightness or the size of text may help prevent your eyes from becoming overworked.

Other Resources

Patients with vision problems may find valuable information with some of the following organizations:

The Library of Congress National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Phone: 888-657-7323 Website: www.loc.gov/nls

National Association for the Visually Handicapped

Phone: 888-205-5951 Website: www.navh.org

Lions Clubs International

Check your local phone book for phone numbers Website: www.lionsclubs.org

American Foundation for the Blind

Phone: 800-232-5463 or 212-502-7600 Website: www.AFB.org

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References:

1. Cohen JR, Katz ER. Low vision alert: Can you read this magazine? *InsideMS*. 2007;49-50. <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/download.aspx?id=289>.