



Optic Neuritis

Optic neuritis is the medical term used to describe an inflammation of the optic nerve. The optic nerve allows us to see by carrying images from our eye to our brain. The optic nerve is like a cable of electrical wire, and consists of about 1,200,000 separate tiny wires or nerve fibers. Each wire carries a part of the visual information we see to the brain. If some or all of the nerve fibers become inflamed and do not function properly, our vision becomes blurred.

With optic neuritis, the nerve tissue becomes swollen and the nerve fibers do not work properly. If many of the nerve fibers are involved, vision may be very poor, but if the optic neuritis is mild, vision may appear normal. Various diseases and conditions may cause optic neuritis. In many cases, however, the cause of optic neuritis is not known. The nerve of one or both eyes may be affected. Some people, especially children, develop optic neuritis following a viral illness such as mumps, measles or a cold. In others, optic neuritis may occur as a sign of a neuralgic disease affecting nerves in various parts of the body.



Optic neuritis usually occurs suddenly. You may notice the following symptoms: Blurred vision in one or both eyes, especially after exercising or a hot bath; vision is dim, as if the lights were turned down; colors appear dull or faded; There may be pain behind the eye, particularly when moving the eyes.

A careful description of these symptoms is important to your ophthalmologist in the diagnosis of optic neuritis. If a cause can be found and treated, further damage may be prevented. Fortunately, most people recover normal vision without any treatment. Although some people may have visual defects from optic neuritis, these are usually very mild. Since optic neuritis can be confused with many other causes of poor vision, an accurate medical diagnosis is important. Dr. Currier may order additional testing and dilated eye exams.