



Wasatch View Eye Care

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Papilledema

Overview

Papilledema is a swelling of the optic nerve head caused by elevated intracranial hypertension. Symptoms include headaches, nausea, decreased vision, double vision and visual field loss. Your eye doctor will notice elevated and blurred optic nerve head margins. Blood vessels coming from the optic nerve are also engorged. The most common causes of papilledema include brain tumors, poor absorption of the cerebral spinal fluid or medications. Treatment consists of managing a tumor if present, diuretics, losing weight and removal of any causative medications.



Signs and Symptoms

The increased intracranial hypertension causes a frequent headache. Some patients will have nausea and vomit. Decreased vision, double vision, flickering and loss of visual field may also occur. If left untreated there can be loss of vision.

Causes

A tumor that blocks the circulation of the cerebral spinal fluid may result in elevated intracranial hypertension. In some patients there is poor absorption of cerebrospinal fluid in the meninges of the brain that leads to intracranial hypertension. It is called pseudotumor cerebri. It happens more frequently in young overweight females. Trauma, some medications and meningitis may also cause papilledema.

Testing & Evaluation

A dilated eye exam by your eye doctor is the way papilledema is identified. Additional testing by a neuro-ophthalmologist includes MRI scans of the brain. A lumbar puncture is warranted to measure how high the intracranial pressure is and to evaluate the make-up of the cerebral spinal fluid. Visual field testing may also be done to evaluate any loss of visual field.

Management

Treatment consists of tumor removal and or radiation. With pseudotumor cerebri weight loss is recommended and patients are started on acetazolamide. Unresponsive treatment may warrant surgical intervention with optic nerve sheath fenestration or a cerebral spinal fluid shunt. Any causative medications need to be discontinued.

Websites

All About Vision:

<https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/papilledema/#:~:text=Optic%20neuritis%2C%20another%20condition%20that,vision%20and%20field%20of%20vision.>

