

Retinopathy of Prematurity – ROP

ROP is a disease of the eyes. It can occur in premature babies. Not all premature babies have ROP. It usually affects infants weighing 3.25 pounds or less who are born before 32 weeks gestation.

With ROP, abnormal blood vessels form at the back of the eye. This can cause damage to the retina. The retina is the part of the eye that allows us to see. If the disease is severe, it can cause vision problems. It may result in blindness.



Your baby should not feel any pain during the exam. She may not like the light, but it will not cause pain.

Often, babies with ROP have no permanent damage to their eyes. In fact, 90% of all infants with ROP have a mild form. They will not need treatment. If your baby has some form of ROP, he will need to have his eyes checked *often*.

Your baby's eye doctor will let you know how often your baby needs to be checked. These exams are carefully timed. The doctor needs to follow the progress of the disease. Changes in the disease can *happen fast*.

If your baby needs treatment, it **must** be done at the right time. Doctors use a laser to treat ROP. It is important for you to keep *all* of your baby's eye appointments. *A missed appointment could result in blindness for your baby.*

Premature babies have a higher risk of childhood eye problems. As your child grows, she will need to have regular check-ups with an ophthalmologist. This doctor will help keep your child's eyes healthy.

The cause of ROP is not completely known. Infants with ROP do not have symptoms. For that reason, it is crucial for a special doctor to exam your baby's eyes for signs of the disease. ROP can only be found with an exam.

The doctor who specializes in eye disease is called an ophthalmologist. In the NICU, this doctor will exam your baby's eyes for signs of ROP. During the exam:

- Your baby will get eye drops.
- The nurse will wrap your baby snugly in a blanket and gently hold her so she will be still.
- The doctor will check your baby's eyes. He will use special instruments and a bright light.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
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