

What is Optic Neuritis?

Optic neuritis can cause loss of vision in both eyes for about 1 out of every 10 patients.

1 Introduction

Optic neuritis is the swelling of the eye's optic nerve, flaring up suddenly from an infection or nerve disease and causes temporary vision loss that typically happens in only one eye. Loss of vision commonly reaches its maximum effect within a few days and starts improving within 4 to 12 weeks. Optic neuritis can affect anyone at any age. However, most cases occur in women ages 20 to 40.

2 Causes

The exact cause of optic neuritis is unknown as most cases are idiopathic, meaning they have no identifiable cause. Optic neuritis is commonly associated with multiple sclerosis and is typically one of the first symptoms of MS. MS can cause demyelination in parts of the brain and spinal cord. This demyelination of the optic nerve is the most common cause of optic neuritis. Some other possible causes are:

- Schilder's disease
- Lyme disease
- Shingles

3 Symptoms

Symptoms of optic neuritis may appear suddenly or develop gradually over a few days. The severity of these can vary widely with more extensive optic nerve inflammation leading to more noticeable symptoms. Common symptoms include:

- Vision loss in one eye
- Eye pain worsened by eye movement
- Blurry vision
- Trouble distinguishing colors
- Visual field loss
- Seeing flashing or flickering lights

4 Treatments

Most cases will recover without treatment and vision will return to normal after a few weeks. If optic neuritis is the result of another condition, treating that condition will often resolve the optic neuritis. In these cases, steroid medications are often used to reduce inflammation in the optic nerve.

Did you know?

About 50% of patients with multiple sclerosis will develop optic neuritis.

For more information on optic neuritis and supportive resources, please visit www.aaao.org

References:

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/14256-optic-neuritis>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/optic-neuritis>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/disease-s-conditions/optic-neuritis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354953>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/optic-neuritis#risk-factors>