

LOOKING AT RETINOBLASTOMA

Retinoblastoma is Often Curable When it is Diagnosed Early

Retinoblastoma is the Most Common Primary Malignant Intraocular Cancer in Children and Almost Exclusively Found in Young Children

While retinoblastoma is an incredibly rare cancer it is important to be knowledgeable of the disease for early care. If untreated retinoblastoma can be deadly after spreading to other parts of the body.

Please use this guide as a resource for knowledge and understanding of retinoblastoma cause, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and post-treatment concerns.

01 | Cause

As with any cancer, retinoblastoma is caused when the nerve cells in the retina develop genetic mutations and overly multiply and grow. Healthy cells have a natural lifecycle ending in death for replacement with a new cell. Cancerous cells constantly grow and multiply at irregular rates with potential to spread into all areas of the body.

02 | Symptoms

Due to retinoblastoma predominately affecting children and infants, symptoms can be rare and hard to notice. Since a child can be born with active cancer in the eye there could be signs that are misdiagnosed as other conditions. Some possible signs of retinoblastoma are:

- Whiteness of the center of the eye, visible as light reflects into the eye
- Eyes that appear to be looking in different directions
- Eye redness
- Eye swelling

03 | Diagnosis

Retinoblastoma can typically be diagnosed by an ophthalmologist who will do a thorough examination of the eye and conduct image testing to see what areas the cancer is affecting. After diagnosis a patient could be referred to a specialist in oncology for the best course of treatment. A geneticist may be needed to test the genetic implications of the cancer.

04 | Treatment

There are many options and directions for treatment depending on the stage and affected areas of the body. Treatment can be difficult due to the age of patients and the complications associated with the various treatment options. The goal with treatment is to remove the cancer and restore vision whenever possible. The various treatment options are:

- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Laser therapy
- Cryotherapy
- Thermotherapy
- Surgery

05 | Post-Treatment

After treatment many families have concerns of the long-term effects of such invasive and serious procedures, especially since many patients of retinoblastoma are very young. The cancer may be cured but the body may have undergone significant stress during treatment. Many experience normal lifespans however some late effects can include:

- Deformities in the bones around the eye
- Reduced kidney function
- Cardiovascular difficulties
- Slowed or delayed growth & development

To learn more about different cancers, please visit:

<https://www.cancer.org>

Did You Know?

Retinoblastoma accounts for about 4% of all cancers in young children under 15

References

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/retinoblastoma-treatment>

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/retinoblastoma/after-treatment/follow-up.html>