

## Epiretinal Membrane



### What is an epiretinal membrane?

An epiretinal membrane, also known as an “ERM,” or “macular pucker,” is a transparent membrane that can form over the macula. The macula is the most sensitive part of the retina, providing us with our central visual field.

### How can a epiretinal membrane affect vision?

An epiretinal membrane can distort the retina underneath it resulting in blurred vision (reduced visual acuity) or metamorphopsia (distortion of vision) at the macula.

### What causes an epiretinal membrane to form?

Epiretinal membranes most often form for no apparent clinical reason (that is, they are “idiopathic”). They are however sometimes known to form as a result of diabetic retinopathy, ocular trauma, other retinal disease, or a posterior vitreous detachment. Age is also considered a risk factor for formation of an epiretinal membrane. Having an epiretinal membrane in one eye is considered a risk factor for developing an epiretinal membrane in the other eye.

### Can epiretinal membranes be prevented?

There is no way to prevent the formation of an epiretinal membrane, though regular eye care can identify this condition early and allow your eye doctor to monitor for any significant changes to your eye’s anatomy and vision.

## How is an epiretinal membrane diagnosed?

Epiretinal membranes are typically diagnosed at a patient's annual comprehensive eye and vision examination. As part of your annual eye check-up, our doctors look at your eyes with various lenses in a technique called "ophthalmoscopy." Often times, the epiretinal membrane gives the retina a frosted appearance which then warrants further testing. Our doctors can perform a scan called optical coherence tomography ("OCT") which allows us to image a cross-section of the retina. This OCT scan allows us to diagnose an epiretinal membrane and to monitor for changes to the retina.

## What treatment is required for epiretinal membranes?

In the majority of patients, no treatment is required for epiretinal membranes. We will typically have patients with an epiretinal membrane return to have a repeat OCT scan and to re-check vision. Your eye doctor will often send you home with an Amsler Grid to allow you to monitor your central vision.

## How do I use an Amsler Grid to monitor my central vision?

The Amsler Grid should be held at your normal reading distance and you should wear your best reading correction while assessing your vision with the grid. This should be done daily and with one eye at a time. If you notice any changes with your vision, you should contact us immediately.

## Do patients require surgery for epiretinal membranes?

While only a small percentage of patients require surgery for epiretinal membranes (about 15% according to one study), there is indeed a surgery that can remove the membrane. This surgery carries some risks and generally isn't recommended unless reduced vision seriously affects the quality of the patient's life.

## What is the general prognosis for patients with an epiretinal membrane?

For the majority of patients diagnosed with an epiretinal membrane, the prognosis is excellent. Epiretinal membranes typically only affect vision by a small amount, and the majority of patients with an epiretinal membrane are monitored and never require surgery.

