

Central Serous Retinopathy

Patient information leaflet

What has happened in your eye

A small pocket of fluid has collected underneath the central part of your retina — rather like a tiny blister lifting the surface away from the layer beneath it. The medical name is central serous chorioretinopathy, usually shortened to CSR or CSC.

It typically affects young and middle-aged adults, and is more common in men. It usually involves one eye, although careful scanning often shows a little change in the other eye too.

What you may notice

- A blurred or dim patch in the centre of your vision
- Objects appearing smaller than with the other eye, or further away
- Straight lines looking slightly bent
- Colours appearing washed out, or vision seeming dulled as though through a film

What brings it on

The cause is not fully understood, but two things stand out. The first is **steroid medication of any kind**. This is worth taking seriously, because most people do not think of these as steroids at all.

- Tablets and injections prescribed for other conditions
- Nasal sprays for allergy, including ones bought without a prescription
- Skin creams and ointments, including those used on the face
- Inhalers, and joint injections

The second is **stress** — a period of pressure, poor sleep or exhaustion very often precedes it. The body produces its own cortisol under strain, which is thought to be the link.

Other things associated with it include stimulants, decongestants, medication for erectile dysfunction, pregnancy, high blood pressure, and a family history. **Please tell me every medicine, spray and cream you use, including anything bought over the counter.** This is the single most useful thing you can do.

Treatment

In most people the fluid clears on its own within a few weeks to a few months, and vision returns. For that reason the first step is usually careful observation with scans rather than treatment.

If you are taking a steroid

- Do not stop it yourself. Some steroids cannot be stopped suddenly without risk.
- I will write to the doctor who prescribed it so that the decision is made together.
- If it can be stopped or changed, the fluid often settles afterwards.

Where fluid persists for several months, or keeps returning, there are treatments — photodynamic therapy using a cold laser, and in some cases other laser or medical options. These are considered once it is clear the condition is not going to settle by itself.

Afterwards

It can come back, in the same eye or the other one. Knowing your own triggers — particularly steroids and periods of heavy stress — is the most useful protection you have. Report any return of the symptoms rather than waiting for a routine appointment.

Reviewed by Dr. Aysun Yucel Gencoglu, MD, FEBO, FICO. Further patient information on retinal conditions is published by the American Society of Retina Specialists at asrs.org/patients.

Notes for you from today's consultation
