

Optic nerve atrophy

Optic nerve atrophy is damage to the optic nerve. The optic nerve carries images of what the eye sees to the brain.

Causes There are many causes of optic atrophy. The most common is poor blood flow. This is called ischemic optic neuropathy. The problem most often affects older adults. The optic nerve can also be damaged by shock, toxins, radiation, and trauma.

Eye diseases, such as glaucoma, can also cause a form of optic nerve atrophy. The condition can also be caused by diseases of the brain and central nervous system. These may include:

Brain tumor Cranial arteritis (sometimes called temporal arteritis) Multiple sclerosis Stroke There are also rare forms of hereditary optic nerve atrophy that affect children and young adults.

Symptoms Optic nerve atrophy causes vision to dim and reduces the field of vision. The ability to see fine detail will also be lost. Colors will seem faded. Over time, the pupil will be less able to react to light, and eventually, its ability to react to light may be lost.

Exams and Tests The health care provider will do a complete eye exam to look for the condition. The exam will include tests of:

Color vision Pupil light reflex Tonometry Visual acuity You may also need a complete physical exam and other tests.

Treatment Damage from optic nerve atrophy cannot be reversed. The underlying disease must be found and treated. Otherwise, vision loss will continue.

Rarely, conditions that lead to optic atrophy may be treatable.

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