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Pre-operative pucker

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What is a macular pucker? The macula is the centermost portion of the retina, located directly in the back of your eye. It is responsible for sharp, detailed vision. Normally, the macula lies flat, like film lining the back of a camera. But in this disorder, it becomes wrinkled or “puckered.” This condition is also called “cellophane maculopathy” or an “epiretinal membrane.”

What causes a macular pucker? A thin, transparent sheet of scar-like tissue migrates across the surface of the macula, where it clings onto the delicate tissues. Eventually, it begins to shrink and create wrinkling of the macula. Eye conditions that may be associated with a macular pucker include:

- Vitreous detachment (aging of gel inside eye)
- Torn or detached retina
- Inflammation inside eye
- Severe injury to eye
- Retinal blood vessel disorders

A macular pucker is not usually related to any medical problem outside the eye.

Is a macular pucker the same as age-related macular degeneration? No. A macular pucker and age-related macular degeneration are two separate and distinct conditions, although the symptoms for each are similar. An eye care professional will know the difference.

What are the symptoms of a macular pucker? Vision becomes blurred and distorted, just as one would expect a picture to appear from a camera with wrinkled film. Straight lines, like doorways or telephone poles can appear wavy. Vision loss can vary from barely noticeable to severe. One or both eyes may be involved. For most people, vision remains stable and does not get progressively worse.

How is it detected? Your ophthalmologist can detect a macular pucker by examining your retina. Various photographic tests are used to determine the extent of damage to the macula.

How is a macular pucker treated? Surgery is not necessary for everyone who has a macular pucker. Eye drops, medicines, and lasers have no effect on this condition. People have mildly blurred vision and are not bothered by it. However, for those whose vision is affected, vitrectomy surgery is the only treatment that can remove a macular pucker. During this outpatient procedure, your doctor uses tiny instruments to remove the scar-tissue that is wrinkling the macula.

Usually, the macula flattens out. The symptoms slowly improve, although the vision may not always return to normal. Typically, patients can expect two or more lines of improvement on the eye chart, however cataracts (clouding of the eye’s lens) may develop sooner.