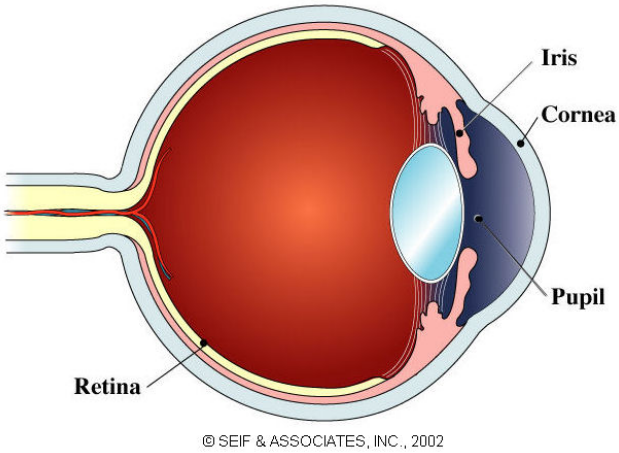
Senile Retinoschisis

The retina is a layer of tissue containing the nerves that receive light and sends the light signals to the brain. The retina lines the inside of the back of the eye.

The term *retinoschisis* means “splitting” of the layers of the retina. In this condition, the inner and outer layers of the retina become separated by cysts. Since the nerves cannot communicate across these cysts, light signals cannot be properly transmitted the brain and vision is effected.



Senile retinoschisis has nothing to do with mental senility, but rather refers to a form of retinoschisis that happens in adults. It usually happens in people older than 20. This condition affects men and women equally. Patients with retinoschisis are more prone to retinal detachments. These are much more serious and can cause loss of vision or blindness.

CAUSES

This condition is caused by small cysts that form in the side (*peripheral*) portions of the retina. The cysts merge together and cause a splitting of the layers of the retina. As the area of splitting grows, it may extend back toward the back of the eye. The splitting rarely goes far enough to cause symptoms of visual loss.

SYMPTOMS

The majority of people with this condition may not have any symptoms. The condition may be discovered during a full eye exam. Sometimes, patients notice a very subtle fuzziness of side vision.

DIAGNOSIS

Retinoschisis is hard to diagnose. It requires a skilled eye physician. The diagnosis should always be confirmed by an ophthalmologist who is a retina specialist.

TREATMENT

There is no treatment for senile retinoschisis. It is still very important to be examined by an ophthalmologist at regular intervals once the diagnosis is made. This is to be sure that no other conditions develop that could cause problems (such as retinal detachment).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a sudden appearance of flashing lights off to the side.
- You have floating dark specks in front of the field of vision.
- You have a drop in vision straight ahead or in any direction of side vision.

Document Released: 03/16/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.