

Information Leaflet for Parents

Treatment for Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP)



Why do my baby's eyes need treatment?

Because your baby has severe Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP). In severe ROP the blood vessels in the back of the eye (retina) develop abnormally and this can cause permanent damage to the retina. Left untreated, severe ROP can seriously affect your baby's vision.

What does the treatment involve?

The most effective way to stop the progress of the abnormal blood vessels in the retina is with a laser. In some situations the ophthalmologist may choose to freeze the blood vessels instead using cryotherapy. Your baby will be sedated or given a general anaesthetic before the operation.

ROP treatment requires specialist expertise. This may not be available in the unit where your baby is being cared for. Your baby may need to be transferred to another unit for the treatment.

When will treatment be given?

Severe ROP needs to be treated quickly to prevent further damage. This will usually be within 48 hours of the severe ROP being diagnosed although it may be a little longer if your baby has to be transferred.

Who will carry out the treatment?

The treatment will be carried out by an experienced ophthalmologist (eye doctor). This may not be the same person who has been screening your baby because ROP treatment is a specialist procedure. You should be given a chance to talk to the ophthalmologist before treatment to ask any questions.

What will happen after the treatment?

After treatment your baby is likely to be given some antibiotic and steroid eye drops to prevent infection and reduce swelling.

An appointment will be made for an eye examination about a week later when the ophthalmologist will check if the treatment has stopped the abnormal blood vessels developing. In most babies one treatment is effective. In a very few cases, a second treatment will be needed around 2-3 weeks later.

Are there any side-effects from the treatment?

This is a surgical procedure, so your baby will be carefully monitored throughout. After the procedure there is a possibility that your baby's eye may look red and swollen.

Will my baby's vision be affected ?

Studies have shown that early treatment gives good results and 50-80% of treated babies have good or very good eyesight. Your baby's ophthalmologist will be able to tell you whether they expect your baby's vision to be affected.

Research has shown that babies with ROP are more likely to be short-sighted, or develop a squint than those without. In babies with severe ROP needing treatment these problems can be more serious. So it is possible your baby will need glasses later on.

Your baby will be given regular eye checks as they grow up so that any vision problems can be picked up.

Where can I get more information?

The staff on the unit or the ophthalmologist treating your baby will be able to give you more information

Name..... Tel.....

BLISS: The premature baby charity is a support group for parents with premature babies. Helpline: 0500 618 140: www.bliss.org.uk Email: enquiries@bliss.org.uk

About this leaflet

This leaflet has been produced to accompany a guideline for the screening and treatment of the ROP developed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. Parents and professionals have helped to write the leaflet. The main guideline contains recommendations for health professionals informed by research evidence.

The full guideline and further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from www.rcpch.ac.uk