



CYSTOID MACULAR EDEMA

The specialized central zone of the retina—the macula—is extremely delicate, and even minute alterations in shape or function can affect our ability to see details clearly. Cystoid macular edema is the term given to a focal accumulation of fluid (edema) at the center of the vision (the macula), sometimes leading to the development of small pockets of fluid (cysts) that can be seen on examination of the retina.

CME can occur under several conditions. Most commonly, it can develop following cataract surgery (occurring weeks, months or even years later). In other cases, CME can be the result of a blockage of circulation (a branch retinal vein occlusion) or other abnormalities of the tiny capillaries of the retina. CME can also be a consequence of chronic inflammation of the eye (uveitis).

The evaluation of CME typically involves a complete eye exam, followed by a detailed photographic study of the retina (fluorescein angiography), which can usually be performed in the doctor's office. The photographs allow your doctor to confirm the cause of the CME, which is crucial to deciding on a plan of treatment.

If the CME occurs after cataract surgery or if it is due to chronic inflammation of the eye (uveitis), a program of topical anti-inflammatory drops is successful in improving the vision in a large percentage of patients. If CME persists, an injection of a local anti-inflammatory medication is often useful. In cases of CME due to leakage from blocked or abnormal blood vessels, laser treatment may be performed to seal the leaky blood vessels. The body then proceeds to "pump out" the fluid and the macular edema resolves.