

RETINITIS PIGMENTOSA

Retinitis pigmentosa is a group of inherited retinal diseases that involve a breakdown of cells in the eye that detect light. This can eventually result in vision loss. Between 82,500 and 110,000 people in the United States have retinitis pigmentosa or a related disorder.

What are the symptoms of retinitis pigmentosa?



Loss of night vision



Difficulty seeing in dim light



Blind spots in peripheral vision



Sensitivity to bright light



Very low vision

How is retinitis pigmentosa diagnosed?

Eye doctors can check for retinitis pigmentosa during a comprehensive dilated eye exam. If the disease is detected, additional tests, a referral to a genetic counselor and a referral to a specialist may be recommended.

Who is at risk for retinitis pigmentosa?

Retinitis pigmentosa is usually hereditary, though some cases occur sporadically. Men are more likely to be affected, but women can still carry the disease-causing gene. Genetic testing can help families understand how the disease is passed down and determine how it will progress.

Are there treatment options for retinitis pigmentosa?

There is no single treatment or cure for retinitis pigmentosa. There are, however, treatment options to help alleviate symptoms. Patients can:

- Use low vision aids and assistive devices.
- Manage associated conditions that may develop.
- Wear sunglasses to avoid excess light exposure.

The FDA has approved two treatments for retinitis pigmentosa. One is voretigene neparvovec-rzyl, a gene therapy that treats leber congenital amaurosis, a type of retinitis pigmentosa. The other is a prosthetic bionic eye to help those with more advanced forms of the condition.

There is ongoing research exploring treatment options for retinitis pigmentosa including transplant research, gene therapy and retinal prosthesis.

Seeking treatment from a health care provider can help ease retinitis pigmentosa symptoms at the onset. It is critical that patients have access to innovative treatment options to help manage the disease.

