



YOUR BABY'S EYE CONDITION

RETINOPATHY OF PREMATURETY (ROP) TESTING

Your baby's eye condition is called Retinopathy of Prematurity or ROP. In premature babies, the blood vessels of the retina sometimes grow the wrong way.

Testing for ROP

This information is about how we test for ROP at the Women's.

Trained nurses will examine your baby using a special digital camera (a RetCam™). The camera takes images of the retina, which is at the back of the eye. These images are reviewed by an eye specialist (ophthalmologist). The eye specialist will check if your baby has ROP and decide when and if a further examination is needed.

Step by step

- » About an hour before the examination, we will put drops in your baby's eyes. The drops will make your baby's pupils bigger. This helps with getting better pictures of the retina so we know the degree of the ROP.
- » Your baby will be swaddled to make them comfortable. We will also give your baby sucrose to help with any pain they may feel.
- » Right before the examination, we will put drops in your baby's eyes that contain a local anaesthetic.
- » Your baby's eyelids will be held open with an eye retractor. This can look distressing but it is important that the eyelids are out of the way so we can get good quality photographs.
- » A lubricant (Polygel) is applied to the surface of your baby's eye.
- » The Retcam lens, which does not touch the eye, is then used to take images of the retina.

How long does the test take?

About 15 minutes from start to finish. The eye retractor is used for less than two minutes. You can choose if you want to be there for the procedure.

Will my baby be in pain?

Your baby may cry because the eye retractors are uncomfortable. However, the local anaesthetic eye drops and the sucrose will ensure there is no pain.

Is the test necessary?

Most babies examined do not have ROP. But if severe ROP is left untreated, it can cause blindness. If your baby has severe ROP, there is treatment available to prevent this.

When will my baby be tested?

If your baby weighs less than 1250 grams or was born before 30 weeks they will be tested for ROP. This occurs at around 30-31 weeks' corrected gestation and will continue every two weeks whether ROP is present or not.

If more severe stages of ROP are seen, your baby will be examined weekly until the ROP resolves. Your baby may also be tested if we think that they are at risk of developing ROP.

They will be discharged from the screening process when the retina is developed, usually about the time that they were due to be born. We will see your baby in about one year, to check their vision.

What happens if the ROP does not improve?

Often ROP improves without any treatment. Staff will discuss further treatment with you if your baby requires it.

Contact us

If you have any questions please email the Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) nurses at rop.nurses@thewomens.org.au or phone 0466 394 321

For further information you can download the Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) Fact Sheet on the Women's website at www.thewomens.org.au

Where to get more information

Women's Health Information Centre (WHIC)

Royal Women's Hospital
T: (03) 8345 3045 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)
E: whicinfo@thewomens.org.au