

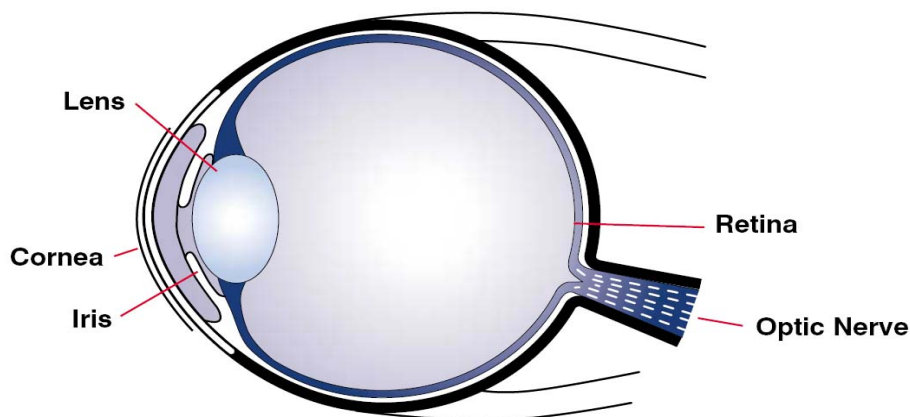
## RETINITIS PIGMENTOSA (RP)

What we see is in fact made in the brain. The brain makes sight from signals given to it by the eyes.

### What is the normal structure of the eye?

The eye is made of three parts.

- A light focusing part at the front (cornea and lens).
- A light sensitive film at the back of the eye (retina).
- A large collection of communication wires to the brain (optic nerve).



## **Retina.**

The retina has two types of light sensitive cells called Rods and Cones.

### **Rods are good at 'seeing'**

- Things that move
- In the dark
- In black and white
- Less detail
- Mostly 'outer' / peripheral vision

### **Cones are good at 'seeing'**

- Things that are still
- In daylight
- In colour
- In fine detail
- Mostly 'central' vision

### **What is Retinitis Pigmentosa?**

- This is a group of conditions that are progressive and mainly affect the Rods.
- Most cases are genetic (that is, there is a problem with the chemical make-up of the body).
- In the early stages of the condition there may be no obvious visual problems.
- Peripheral (outer) vision is affected first.
- In the late stages of the more severe cases, this may produce 'tunnel vision' and sometimes cause reduced central vision.
- In many cases symptoms do not occur until teenage years or later.

## How does this affect the way my child sees?

### **Vision.**

- This may **not** be affected especially when lighting is good.
- Symptoms may vary at different times of the day and different times of the year.
- In the early stages there may be problems when lighting levels are reduced eg. at dusk.
- Children may manage well during the summer months but may have problems in the winter.

There are usually no other problems. Visual symptoms tend to occur in adulthood.

## What can be done to help?

1. **Genetic counselling.** Ask your eye specialist for help or details.
2. **Emotional support.** As visual problems often begin during adolescence, extra support at this time is often helpful.
3. **Mobility.** Advice or training may be necessary.
4. Be aware of possible need for help to and from school especially in the winter months.

## How can parents, family, friends and teachers make a difference?

1. Be aware of the problems caused by **loss of night vision** and of the effect this may have on the young person's ability to get around on darker evenings and on his/her social life.
2. **Learn about the condition** and how it may affect your child's vision.
3. Seek advice and provide support.
4. **Career advice** needs to take the long-term effects of RP into consideration.

## Useful contacts.



### **Birmingham Focus on Blindness**

Tel: 0121 478 5200

### **RNIB**

Tel: 0845 766 9999

### **LOOK (or families with visually impaired children)**

Tel: 0121 428 5038

### **British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society**

PO Box 350,

Buckingham

MK18 1GZ

Tel: 01280 815 900

E-mail: [info@brps.org.uk](mailto:info@brps.org.uk)

Web Site: [www.brps.org.uk](http://www.brps.org.uk)

**This information is intended to describe most aspects of the condition but each child is different and there will always be exceptions.**

### **Acknowledgements**

This leaflet was compiled by a multidisciplinary team from the eye departments at Birmingham Children's Hospital and Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham Focus on Blindness and Birmingham Specialist Support Services.