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What is retinopathy of prematurity by [Cumurciuc Andrea](#)

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Retinopathy of prematurity is a vision condition affecting babies born before the 30th week of gestation or weighing fewer than 3 pounds at birth. The condition is caused by the fact the blood vessels of the retina complete their development only at the time of normal birth. If the eye development is interrupted, blood vessels might stop growing or they grow abnormally. Considering that the vessels are fragile, they can cause bleeding in the eye, which will lead to the development of scar tissues. These tissues will then force the retina to detach from the inner layers of the eye, a situation which leads to vision impairment or in severe cases to blindness.

Besides premature birth other risk factors of the condition include: low levels of oxygen in the blood, high levels of carbon dioxide in the body, breathing problems, slow heart rate, infections, bleeding in the brain and mechanical ventilation therapy. The longer a premature baby is exposed the oxygen levels different than his needs, the higher the chances of developing the condition. Considering that currently oxygen level can be easily monitored, the incidence of ROP should be lower. However, new therapies allow babies born very prematurely to live, a situation that causes the increase of the number of cases.

Fortunately ROP is a treatable condition. Early treatment improves the chances of normal vision and the majority of babies diagnosed with the condition will recover completely. However in more severe cases freezing of eye tissues and surgery will be needed.

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For more information about a [retinopathy of prematurity](#) please consult your doctor or ophthalmologist.

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