



Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund
A Global Response To Childhood Retinoblastoma

Retinoblastoma Factsheet

What is Retinoblastoma?

Retinoblastoma (RB) is a fast growing eye cancer of early childhood. It occurs in a heritable and a non-inheritable form. .

Approximately 45% of children with Retinoblastoma have the heritable form of the disease. About two thirds of children with Retinoblastoma have only one affected eye, but in one third, tumours develop in both eyes. Rb almost always develops before 5 years of age, and some children are born with the cancer.

How common is Retinoblastoma?

Retinoblastoma is a rare cancer. Each year, between 45 children are newly diagnosed each year in the UK, 300 in the US and 24 in Canada. Countries with a high birth rate, such as India, diagnose more than 1,500 children annually. Retinoblastoma accounts for only about 3 out of every 100 cancers occurring in children under the age of 15 years in the developed world.

What are the symptoms of Retinoblastoma?

The main symptom is an abnormal appearance of the pupil, which tends to reflect light as a white reflex, like a cat's eye. This is usually only visible in low artificial lighting, or in photographs where a flash has been used. Sometimes children also have a squint. Less common signs are deterioration of vision, a red and irritated eye, pain, failure to thrive or delayed development.



What is the treatment for Retinoblastoma?

A number of different therapies are used to treat Retinoblastoma. These include laser, cryotherapy (freezing the tumour), chemotherapy (drug treatment), radioactive plaque, radiotherapy and enucleation (surgical removal of the eye). The type of treatment received will depend on factors such as the size, location and number of tumours within the eye, and the potential for vision. If both eyes are affected, each eye will be treated on its own merit.

What is the Prognosis?

Early diagnosis and treatment is essential as Retinoblastoma will quickly spread beyond the eye to the brain or bone marrow. Left untreated, this cancer is always fatal. However, considerable advances in the treatment of Retinoblastoma have been made over the past two decades, leading to one of the highest cure rates among childhood cancer patients. 95% of children are now successfully treated in the UK, and most retain some useful vision. Close surveillance of all children with a family history of Retinoblastoma leads to earlier diagnosis and successful treatment.