



## Denial: Are you ignoring signs of a problem?

Weekly, we examine patients who have conditions with accompanying signs that they had tried to ignore for days, weeks and even months. The symptoms range from pain to double vision to loss of sight in one eye. Potential bad news pushed to the bottom of the to-do list just might disappear. Unfortunately, waiting can cause more harm. Here are a few examples of the top conditions that when ignored come with dire consequences.

**Stroke** (CVA-cerebral vascular accident)-This condition has some strong visual warnings. A patient, a 74 year old male, presented to the office after noting several occurrences of double vision and “visual confusion” upon awakening over the prior few weeks. Though he denied blurred vision, the partial and full loss of sight in one of these episodes is extremely common. He was diagnosed with the less threatening TIA or transient ischemic attack. It is important to note that untreated, one third of those with TIA’s will proceed to a full blown stroke within a year.

**Retinal tear/retinal detachment**-The hallmark sign here is the presence of flashes of light (most noted in darkened rooms) and relatively large floaters. These floaters are bits of debris that either break free from either the vitreal (gel) bag that fills the back portion of the eye or, more detrimentally, from the retina. These phenomena can either signal a retinal tear or detachment or announce their upcoming tear or detachment. It is paramount that treatment be instituted as quickly as possible.

**Chronic painful dry eye**- The pain here spikes occasionally, but not for long and it is considered tolerable. After many months, although the eyes remain red, the pain seems to lessen because the nerves begin to die off. Subsequently, the corneal tissue begins to slough and scar and, as a result, sight decreases. With the technology that has advanced around dry eye treatment, this scenario should never need to occur. Chronic dry eye needs to be treated in the earlier stages so less medical intervention is necessary down the road.

**Diabetic complications**-Things can become blurry quickly! The more abrupt or rapid the blur, the worse the prognosis is. The most acceptable of the changes is the rapid swelling of the lens, which though cataract-like, is reversible. Cataracts in diabetics cause early glare and mature more quickly than other types. Diabetic retinopathy is characterized by bleeds and other vessel leaking. When it involves the central retina (the macula) sight may seem wavy and overall sight drops. Controlling the underlying diabetic condition dramatically increases the odds of a visually unaffected life. If diabetic eye disease is present, we can guide the proper treatment that will salvage as much vision as possible.

