

Child Abuse & Neglect Tips

"DID YOU KNOW?"

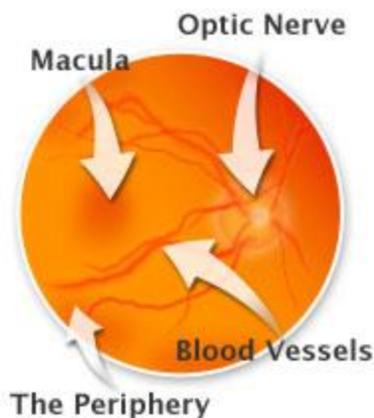
Did you know that pediatric healthcare specialists other than forensic pediatricians are considered "experts" in child abuse?

- Pediatric Ophthalmologists - have special training to care for eye diseases, visual development, and vision care in children

Pediatric ophthalmologists can help determine the number and severity of retinal hemorrhages seen in association with Abusive Head Trauma (AHT). There is a correlation between the severity of brain injury and injury to the retina. Hemorrhages can be bilateral (both eyes), pre-retinal (on the surface of the retina), extensive, multilayered, extending out to the edges of the retina (ora serrata), under the retina (subretinal), or within the retinal tissue. A particularly important form of hemorrhage is caused by the splitting of the retinal layers, with blood accumulating in this space (retinoschisis). Other than in AHT, such findings have only been reported in children under 5 years old in two cases of fatal crush injuries to the head and in cases of severe fatal motor accidents.

Questions to Ask: How many retinal hemorrhages are there? Are they bilateral (involving both eyes)? Could this type of retinal hemorrhage be seen with other disease processes? Have those other disease processes been ruled out? Doctor, in your medical opinion, are these hemorrhages most consistent with non-accidental trauma?

Normal retina (back of eye) – anatomy (parts) labeled



Retina showing multiple, large retinal hemorrhages (big red splotches). Blood vessels are enlarged and abnormal in shape. Optic nerve is swollen because of increased pressure on the brain.

