Vision blocked by bright spots

Q I am a 48-year-old woman. One day in January, when I was reading a book, I noticed that there was a blocked spot on the right side of my vision. When my eyes were closed, I could ‘see’ a bright patch in front of my right side. There were colours surrounding the patch. The blocked spot cleared on its own after about 30 minutes. Is this an eye problem or has it something to do with my brain? Please advise.

A It sounds like you have suffered an attack of ocular migraine. This name can refer to two different conditions – one is usually not a cause for concern but the other might have more serious complications.

In some cases, ocular migraine describes a migraine aura – a symptom that usually precedes or accompanies a migraine – though it can sometimes occur without a headache. Migraine auras are often visual, but may also include other sensations such as numbness. Two of the most familiar of light sensations are blind spots or shimmering spots orstars. Such visual symptoms are fleeting and will affect patterns, blind spots or shimmering spots or stars or accompanies a migraine – though it can sometimes occur without a headache. Sometimes, an ocular migraine is used as a synonym for another condition called retinal migraine.

A retinal migraine is a rare retinal condition which is caused by an infarction (an area of tissue death due to lack of oxygen) or vasospasm (a spasm of blood vessels that restricts blood flow and can lead to tissue death) in the affected eye. It is associated with repeated bouts of fleeting, diminished vision or temporary blindness. This may precede or accompany a headache. Unlike a migraine aura affecting vision, a retinal migraine will affect only one eye and not both.

Most often, the loss of vision in one eye is not related to migraine. It is generally caused by some other more serious condition and can be associated with some degree of permanent visual loss in the affected eye. So, if you experience visual loss in only one eye, you should be examined by an eye specialist immediately.

DR NATASHA LIM, medical director of Singapore Medical Group’s Centre for Eye Surgery and The Lasik Surgery Clinic @ Westcoast

Surgery Matters: What You Need To Know

A Community Health Education Symposium

25 June, 2011, Saturday
Serenity Towers Singapore, Level 2, Topaz Ballroom, 39 Scotts Road Singapore 228230

Programme

1.00 pm  Registration
1.30 pm  Welcome Address by ParkwayHealth
1.40 pm  A Community Health Education Symposium: Overview
Dr Stanley Natcha, General & Vascular Surgeon
Gleneagles Hospital
2.10 pm  Endometrial Tumours: Update on Recent Treatments
Dr Ng Kheng Hiong, General Surgeon
Gleneagles Hospital
2.40 pm  Q&A
3.00 pm  Light Refractions
3.25 pm  Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography & Endoscopic Ultrasound: How These May Help Patients
Dr Yap Chee Kiong, Gastroenterologist
Mount Elizabeth Hospital
3.55 pm  Hepatitis & Liver Cancer: Treatment Options
Dr Tan Wee Hoe, General Surgeon
Gleneagles Hospital
4.25 pm  Q&A
4.45 pm  End

To register
Phone: 6344 6652
Fax: 6344 6662
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