

CBCnews

Man regains sight after 55 years

CBC News Posted: Jun 17, 2011 5:19 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 17, 2011 5:19

A man who was blind in his right eye has had his sight restored after 55 years, doctors say. The man was blinded after being hit in the eye with a stone that caused his retina to become detached.

In Friday's online issue of the Journal of Medical Case Reports, doctors explain how the man was able to see and count fingers again following surgery. It is unusual for the retina to become detached. A head injury, myopia or diabetes can sometimes be the cause. When a retina is detached for a long time, degenerative changes often mean it is impossible to restore sight even if the retina is reattached, doctors say.



In this case, the 63-year-old went to hospital complaining of

Photo: Head injury, myopia or diabetes can cause the retina to detach. Damian Dovarganes/Associated Press

pain and redness. Doctors found there were swelling, bleeding and high fluid pressure in his right eye.

Doctors at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary washed the eye out and treated it with a drug that stops new blood vessels from forming and found that against the odds, he regained light perception.

Encouraged by those results, they decided to try to reattach his retina.

"Following these procedures, he had visual recovery to counting fingers vision in his right eye at five metres," Dr. Olusola Olawoye and co-authors wrote.

"To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of visual recovery in a patient with long-standing traumatic retinal detachment. This is not only a great result for our patient but has implications for restoring eyesight in other patients, especially in the context of stem cell research into retinal progenitor cells which may be able to be transplanted into diseased retinas to restore vision."