

Anophthalmia/Microphthalmia

What is it?

Anophthalmia and microphthalmia are birth defects of the eyes. **Anophthalmia** (pronounced an-op-thal-me-ah) is the absence of one or both eyes. **Microphthalmia** (pronounced mi-croph-thal-me-ah) is the underdevelopment of one or both eyes. This means one or both eyes will be very small. These conditions often lead to blindness or limited vision.



Anophthalmia



Microphthalmia

Images courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

How common is it?

About 1 in every 5,300 babies will be born with one of these conditions.

What causes it?

The causes of these conditions are often not known. Sometimes they can be caused by taking certain medicines during pregnancy. There may be many factors that cause these conditions. More research is needed to understand the exact cause.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

They can be diagnosed during pregnancy by screening tests. After birth these conditions can be diagnosed by physical examination and referral to a special eye doctor called an **ophthalmologist**. There is no treatment to create a new eye or restore complete vision. However, there are ways to help the eye sockets develop normally. Children may also be fitted for an artificial eye. Other eye conditions can develop in children with these conditions. Your child's ophthalmologist should monitor for any other eye conditions as the child grows.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/anophthalmia-microphthalmia.html>

National Eye Institute
<https://nei.nih.gov/health/anophthalmia>