

IRIS CYSTS

Iris cysts are fluid-filled spheres which arise from the back of the iris (the colored part of the eye). They tend to be found in certain breeds of dog such as the Golden Retriever, Labrador Retriever, and Boston Terrier. The cysts may remain attached to the iris, or they may break free and float around in the anterior chamber inside the eye. The number and sizes of iris cysts can vary. Iris cysts can pop and deflate on their own, and new cysts may develop over the life of the patient. It is important to point out that iris cysts are not tumors!

Many patients with iris cysts are never bothered by them. In some cases, iris cysts can become large enough or numerous enough to obscure vision. Such vision loss is usually the primary clinical concern associated with iris cysts. Less often, an iris cyst may prevent the pupil from constricting properly, or may rub against the cornea and cause cloudiness. Glaucoma associated with iris cysts has been reported in the Golden Retriever breed.

Corrective surgery can alleviate vision problems associated with iris cysts. The goal is to reduce the size of the cyst by draining fluid out of the cyst with a needle, or popping the cyst using the diode laser. Laser treatment is a less invasive technique. The energy of the laser beam is absorbed only by pigmented tissue, but does not affect clear or light-colored tissue. Therefore, when the beam is directed into the eye from the outside, it passes safely through the cornea and causes the iris cyst inside the eye to burst.