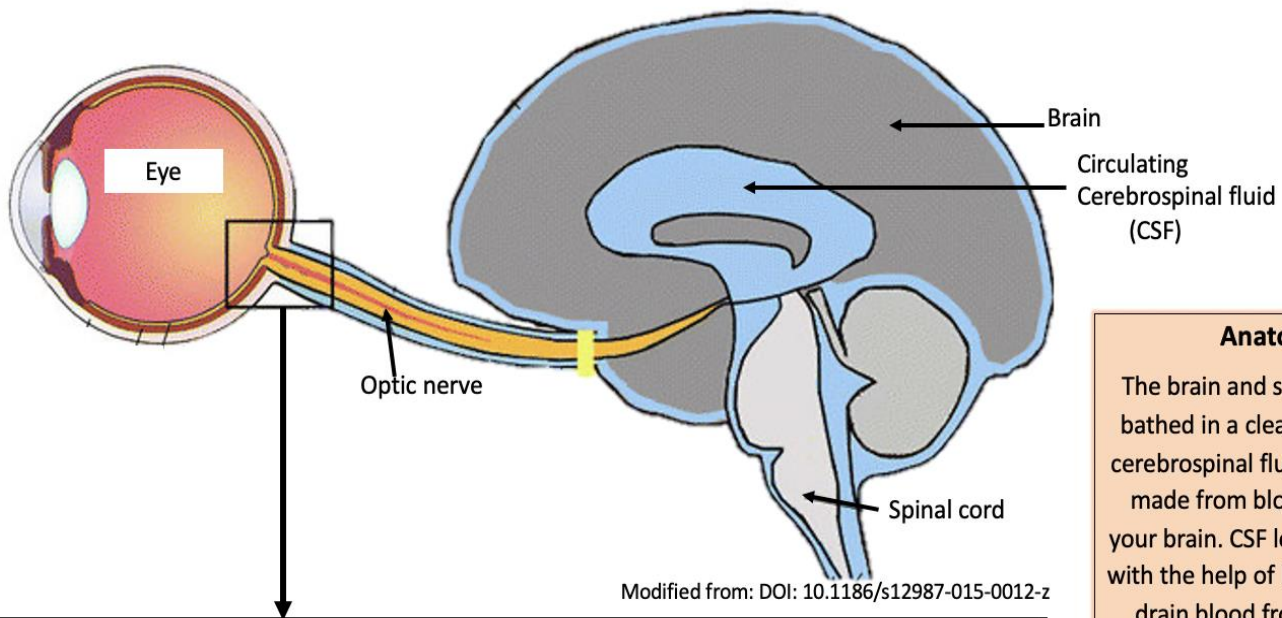


## What is Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension?

Idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH) is also called “pseudotumour cerebri” (PTC) or “benign intracranial hypertension (BIH). Simply put, people with IIH have high pressure inside the head for no known reason.



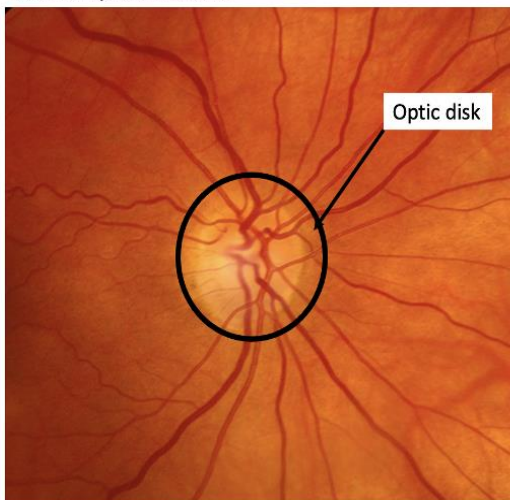
### Anatomy

The brain and spinal cord are bathed in a clear liquid called cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). CSF is made from blood vessels in your brain. CSF leaves the brain with the help of large veins that drain blood from the brain

### Physiology

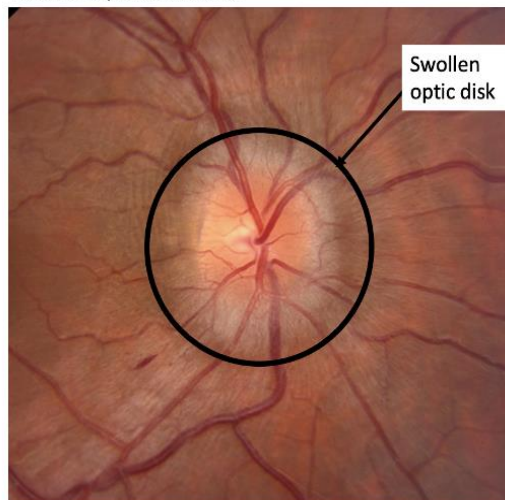
In IIH, CSF cannot flow out normally. This leads to high pressure inside your head. The high pressure pushes on the back of the eye causing swelling of the optic nerve.

Normal Optic disk/nerve



Optic disk has sharp edges

Swollen Optic disk/nerve



Optic disk has blurred edges

## Who gets IIH?

IIH typically affects young, overweight women, although there are always exceptions. IIH may be triggered by recent weight gain. Sometimes IIH is not actually “idiopathic” and is caused by certain medications like tetracycline antibiotics, acne medications, estrogen or steroids.

## What are the symptoms of IIH?

### Headache

The most common symptom of IIH is headache. These headaches are different from most other headaches because they usually get worse with lying down. They may cause you to wake up from sleep. If the pressure is very high, you may feel nauseous or even throw up.

Some people hear a whooshing sound in their head in time with their heartbeat.

### Vision loss

Swelling of the optic nerves can cause vision problems including blurred vision, flashing lights, or temporary vision loss with bending over or straining. Sometimes, high pressure may damage the nerves that move the eyes, resulting in double vision.

## How is IIH diagnosed?

Most people with IIH have swelling of their optic nerves. Your eye doctor can detect this by dilating your pupils and looking at the back of your eyes. Swollen optic nerves can be caused by many other things and it important that your eye doctor makes sure there is nothing else going on. To do this, your doctor will arrange imaging of your brain, either an MRI or a CT scan. If this is normal, the next step is a spinal tap, both to measure the intracranial pressure and to make sure there is no infection or inflammation in the spinal fluid.

## How is IIH treated?

### Medication

The most common medication used to treat IIH is called acetazolamide (Diamox). Most people need to take the medication for around 1.5-2 years and then can stop. It can cause side effects, including tingling of fingers and toes, nausea, feeling unwell, or a bad taste, particularly with carbonated drinks.

### Surgery

Surgery is recommended for people who don't respond to the medication or who have severe symptoms. Surgery may involve placing a tube from your brain into your abdomen to relieve the pressure (drain the CSF), or propping open the veins that drain blood from your head. Another option is to make an opening in the covering around your optic nerves to reduce the pressure behind your eyes.

### Weight Loss

If you are overweight, the most effective treatment of IIH is weight loss.