



HOW TO USE THE BASIC GUIDE TO RETINAL CONDITIONS

**GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE
PROFESSIONALS**

INTRODUCTION

Retinal conditions can have a significant impact on a person's independence and emotional wellbeing. Patients and families often receive a large amount of information at diagnosis and may require additional support to understand their condition and access available resources.

The *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* was developed by Retina South Africa as a patient-friendly educational resource designed to complement, not replace, information provided by healthcare professionals.

This document is designed for ophthalmologists and other healthcare professionals involved in retinal care in South Africa. It provides guidance on the *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions*, including its purpose and intended audience, how to access and share it, and when and how to introduce it. This document also details how clinicians can refer patients to Retina South Africa for further information and support.



This guide helps healthcare professionals introduce the *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* and connect patients to Retina South Africa for further support.

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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BASIC GUIDE TO RETINAL CONDITIONS?

The *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* provides an overview, in patient-friendly language suitable for those without a medical background, of common retinal conditions:

Age-related Macular Degeneration

Diabetic Retinopathy

Inherited retinal conditions:
Retinitis Pigmentosa, Usher Syndrome, Stargardt Disease, Cone-Rod Dystrophy, Leber Congenital Amaurosis

It is designed to:

- Provide clear, accessible information about common retinal conditions
- Support understanding of symptoms
- Signpost patients to Retina South Africa
- Encourage discussions between patients, families, caregivers and healthcare professionals
- Alleviate anxiety and uncertainty when navigating care

The *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* is intended for people with a suspected or diagnosed retinal condition and their family members and caregivers.



Although the Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions discusses the management and prevention of retinal conditions, it is not presented as a substitute for medical advice.

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WHEN SHOULD THE BASIC GUIDE TO RETINAL CONDITIONS BE INTRODUCED?

You are encouraged to use the *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* at key points throughout the patient journey.

Where possible, you should briefly provide an overview and explain the purpose of the *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* and identify the sections that are specifically relevant for the patient's condition.

Additionally, you should introduce them to Retina South Africa as a resource for further support at any stage of the patient journey.

AT DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis of a retinal condition can be overwhelming. Introducing the guide at this stage can help patients and families.

- Review information that was discussed during the consultation
- Better understand their diagnosis and its implications
- Prepare questions they may have regarding their diagnosis



DURING TREATMENT DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW-UP VISITS

Treatment decisions and ongoing management can raise new questions and concerns for patients and families. Introducing the guide at this stage can help:

- Reinforce key information and understanding of the condition
- Support ongoing engagement with care
- Provide a trusted resource that patients can refer back to between appointments



AT PATIENT EDUCATION EVENTS

These events provide an opportunity for patients and families to learn more about retinal conditions, treatment and available support.

Introducing the guide at this stage can help:

- Support continued learning and understanding of the condition
- Encourage ongoing engagement with healthcare professionals and Retina South Africa
- Provide a trusted source of information beyond the event



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HOW CAN THE BASIC GUIDE TO RETINAL CONDITIONS BE ACCESSED?

The *Basic Guide to Retinal Conditions* is available in both printed and digital formats. The digital version is hosted on Retina South Africa's website and includes alt text for visuals to improve accessibility for people with visual impairment who use screen readers.

The printed version includes a QR code on the inside of the front cover that links to the digital version.

You can share the digital version with patients and families through:

- Email following consultations
- The clinic website
- QR codes displayed in clinic rooms

Where printed copies are available, these may be provided during clinic visits for patients or families who prefer a physical resource.

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HOW CAN PATIENTS BE REFERRED TO RETINA SOUTH AFRICA?

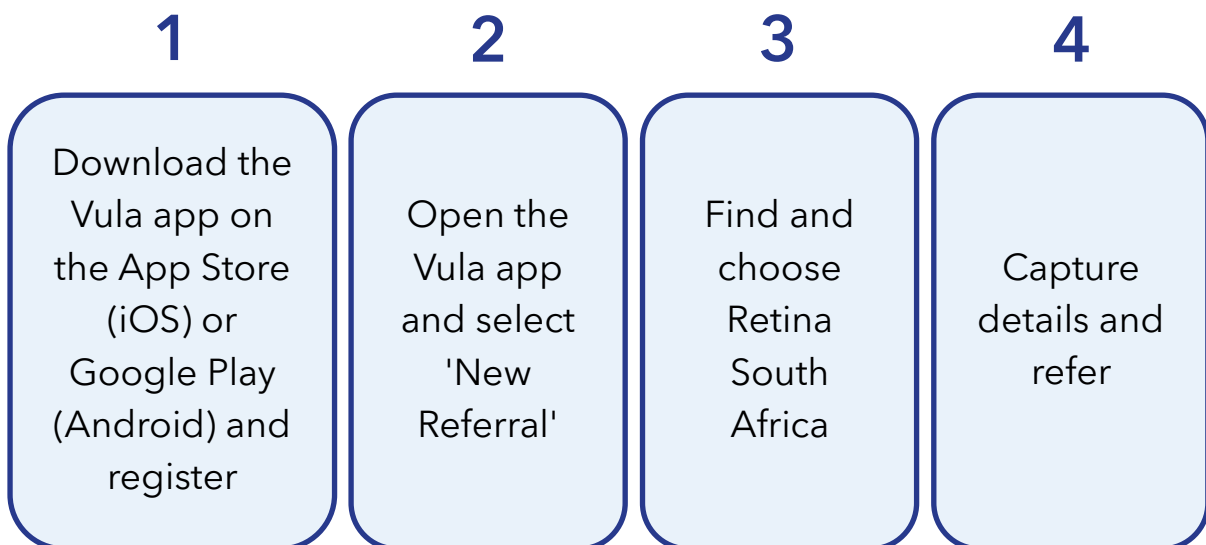
Retina South Africa is the only patient-led advocacy and support charity for individuals with a range of retinal conditions in South Africa.

The key services Retina South Africa provides are:

- Specialist referral pathways for diagnosis
- Support groups for patients and families
- Guidance on living with retinal conditions
- Resources and advocacy for ongoing care
- Referral for free eye screenings during specific promotions

You can initiate a referral so patients can access and become part of Retina South Africa's support networks.

You can refer patients to Retina South Africa via the **Vula app**:



Referrals are voluntary; patients can choose not to be referred or reach out to Retina South Africa independently. You can also contact Retina South Africa directly using the following details:

- Office: 011 450 1181
- Share call: 0860 59 59 59 (local SA calls only)
- Email: headoffice@retinasa.org.za
- Website: <https://retinasa.org.za/>