











TO YOUR **GOOD HEALTH**

Vision loss may cause hallucinations

DEAR DR. ROACH: When I lost the vision in my eye in an accident, I had Charles Bonnet syndrome hallucinations. I am 80 years old, and I went completely blind in one eye. There were patterns that I saw whenever my eye was unfocused, which pretty much obscured everything. I saw complicated figures like very bright TV. I have read Oliver Sacks' explanation in his latest book, called "Hallucinations." What I viewed is exactly how he described CBS. Seven months later, I am still having hallucinations, but they are much subdued and not very interesting. I think it is gradually disappearing.

What concerns me is that none of the hospital personnel knew of the syndrome. The best that was offered was that it was from a bladder infection, which I did not think I had. I imagine that there are a lot of old blind folks who think they are crazy, and there is no one to tell them otherwise. I am hoping you might write an explanation for all of us who have failing eyesight and no explanation for what ails us. I had so many interesting visions, and since I knew it was not real, I rather enjoyed it. -L.R.

ANSWER: I can't criticize the doctors at your hospital too much, since I had never heard about this type of hallucination before your letter. In fact, a brief survey of some colleagues, with hundreds of years' worth of clinical experience, showed me that many of us, unlike Dr. Sacks, had never heard of this syndrome, so I am glad to be able to bring it up.

Charles Bonnet syndrome, also called visual release hallucinations, occur in people who are losing or have lost vision. It does seem to be more common in the elderly, but it has been reported in children. Most people who have had these hallucinations do not bring it up to their doctor, probably because they fear being labeled as having a psychiatric disease. It is thought to happen due to the

firing of nerve cells in areas of the brain that process vision when they are deprived of visual input from the optic nerve.

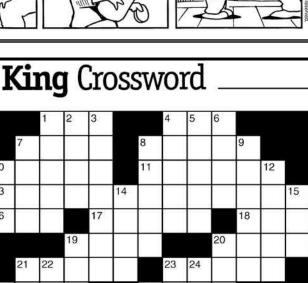
There are treatments available. including moving the eyes rapidly back and forth, which often can stop the hallucinations if they are bothersome. There are also medications to stop them in people who don't enjoy them the way you have.

DEAR DR. ROACH: A dear friend of mine has been diagnosed with polymyalgia rheumatica and is being treated with prednisone. Can you give me any information about this illness? - G.O.

ANSWER: Polymyalgia rheumatica is a common illness, almost always found in people over 50. It causes pain and stiffness, especially in the arms and shoulders, and especially in the morning. It responds very well to low to moderate doses (10-20 mg) of prednisone. The prednisone is continued usually for one to two years.

PMR often is associated with a more serious condition, temporal (or giant cell) arteritis. Any symptoms of vision loss need to be evaluated immediately, since permanent blindness can result.





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ACROSS Integers

(Abbr.)

Baby's

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Parka

16 Chum

Journey

segment

Mr. Crockett

Roof edges

21 Accumulate 23 Carriages Coagulate

"Peter Pan"

pooch Existed 28 Oddballs

30 Extinct bird 33 1996 movie title that's an anagram of

13-Across

36 Champagne + OJ Two under par

Ship of the desert

39 Sore Tex- --

cuisine 41 Speck

DOWN 1 Fleet-related 2 Finished

4 Yearns (for) 5 Run off to wed

3 Methods

6 Early helicopter

7 Information 8 Church law Alligator's

cousin 10 Kreskin's

claim 12 Recognizes 26 Kathmandu's

14 Angers land 15 Heavy weight 28 Travelocity 19 Cheerios mascot

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22 Tile art 32 Candle 23 Variety of count? 34 Mosque shark

24 As a substibigwig 35 Snack in a tute 25 5 percent of

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SALOME'S STARS

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You're not Sheepish when it comes to asserting your opinions on what you think is right or wrong. Be assured that you're being heard, and something positive will follow.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Your sense of justice makes it difficult not to speak up about a recurring matter involving a co-worker. But, once again, you need facts to back you up before you can act.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Romance is still dominant, and if Cupid misfired before, don't worry. He'll take better aim at someone new this time around. Expect favorable news about a financial matter.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) The zodiac's Moon Children can expect

things to work out pretty much as planned. One negative note involves a minor relationship problem that suddenly turns serious.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) You're suddenly being asked to make choices between two practically equal offers. Which one to choose? Easy. The one most likely to gladden your Lion's heart.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Once again, you're confronted by a workplace problem you thought you'd already resolved. This time, you might need to go higher up to find a just reso-

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Good for you: You're determined to stick with your goals and ignore those naysayers who might try to discourage you. You're on the right track. The challenge now is to stay on it.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) You'll soon get news that is supposed to help you with a troublesome situation. Use your sharp Scorpion instincts to determine if the information

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) If you learn someone has betrayed your trust, don't just accept it and walk away. You need to know why that person decided to do what he or she did.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) A painful family relationship problem could finally begin to heal. Be prepared to show more flexibility than you might like. But it could be worth it.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) It's a good idea to enhance your career skills so you'll be prepared to accept a more responsible position when it's offered. A friend returns a favor just when you need it.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Show that strong, steely backbone that you usually hide, and demand to be included in any family decision-making that could affect the well-being of a loved one.

King Crossword **Answers** Solution time: 25 mins.

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