The retina requires a large amount of oxygen in order to function. The choroid region of the retina is responsible for supplying most of the oxygen-filled blood to the retina. So a lack of blood in the choroid region will lead to a lack of oxygen in the retina, causing damage to the parts of the retina that are sensitive to light; these are called photoreceptors.

When there is an excess of cobalt in the bloodstream, it is as if the retina’s oxygen supply is diminished. Therefore, the authors believe high cobalt levels in humans damage the photoreceptors in the retina. This pattern has been observed in several animal studies.

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