BUNBURY & BUSSELTON EYE SPECIALISTS

PATIENT INFO AND ADVICE

What is Uveitis?

The eye is shaped much like a tennis ball, with three different layers of tissue surrounding the central gel-filled cavity.

The innermost layer is the **retina,** which senses light and helps to send images to your brain. The middle layer between the sclera and retina is called the **uvea.** The outermost layer is the **sclera,** the strong white wall of the eye. Uveitis (pronounced you-vee-EYE-tis) is inflammation of the uvea.

What is the importance of the uvea?

The uvea contains many blood vessels — the veins, arteries and capillaries — that carry blood to and from the eye. Since the uvea nourishes many important parts of the eye (such as the retina), inflammation of the uvea can damage your sight.

What are the symptoms of uveitis?

Symptoms of uveitis include:

- Light sensitivity
- Blurred vision
- Pain
- Floaters
- Redness of the eye

Uveitis may develop suddenly with redness and pain or with a painless blurring of your vision.

What are the causes of uveitis?

Uveitis has many different causes:

- Infection such as
    1) A virus, such as shingles, mumps or herpes simplex;
    2) A fungus, such as histoplasmosis;
    3) A parasite, such as toxoplasmosis;
- Autoimmune disease such as
    1) Arthritis
    2) gastrointestinal disease
    3) collagen vascular disease such as lupus;

- A result of injury to the eye.
- In most cases of uveitis, the cause of the disease remains unknown.

If you smoke, stop. Studies have shown that smoking contributes to the likelihood of developing uveitis.

How is uveitis diagnosed?

A careful eye examination by an eye doctor is important when symptoms occur. Your ophthalmologist will examine the inside of your eye. He or she may order blood tests, skin tests or X-rays to help make the diagnosis.

Since uveitis can be associated with disease in other parts of the body, your ophthalmologist will want to know about your overall health. He or she may want to consult with your primary care physician or other medical specialists.

Are their different kinds of uveitis?

There are different types of uveitis, depending on which part of the eye is affected.

When the uvea is inflamed near the front of the eye in the iris, it is called **iritis.** Iritis has a sudden onset and may last six to eight weeks.

If the uvea is inflamed in the middle of the eye, it is called **pars planitis** (or intermediate uveitis). Episodes of pars planitis can last between a few weeks to years. The disease goes through cycles of getting better, then worse.

An inflammation in the back of the eye is called **posterior uveitis.**

Since uveitis can be associated with disease in other parts of the body, your ophthalmologist will want to know about your overall health. He or she may want to consult with your primary care physician or other medical specialists.

How is uveitis treated?

Uveitis is a serious eye condition that may scar the eye. It needs to be treated as soon as possible.

Eye drops, especially corticosteroids and pupil dilators, can reduce inflammation and pain. For more severe inflammation, oral medication or injections may be necessary.

Uveitis can be associated with these complications:

- Glaucoma (increased pressure in the eye)
- Cataract (clouding of the eye's natural lens)
- Neovascularization (growth of new, abnormal blood vessels)
- Damage to the retina, including retinal detachment

These complications may also need treatment with eye drops, conventional surgery or laser surgery.

If you have a “red eye” that does not clear up quickly, contact your ophthalmologist

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