

Treatment for your iritis eye condition

Department of Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is iritis?

Iritis is the swelling of the coloured part of the eye (iris).

What causes iritis?

Most of the time we do not know the cause of iritis.

Iritis can sometimes be linked with other medical health problems such as

- pain and swelling in the joints (arthritis),
- swelling of the spine and other areas of the body (ankylosing spondylitis)
- inflammatory bowel disease.

A serious injury to the eye may cause iritis. Patients who have had an eye operation that involves replacing the cloudy lens inside the eyes with an artificial one (cataract surgery), may get iritis in the first few weeks after the operation.

Rarely, is it caused by infection inside the eyeball. The back of the eye may also be involved, and the treatment will be with the correct type of antibiotics.

Iritis has also been caused by upsetting situations such as grief or stress.

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What are the signs?

The doctor may ask about the signs of other related diseases to try and find out the cause of the swelling. Usually only 1 eye is affected at a time.

Signs include:

- red, painful eye (but not gritty or scratchy)
- not able to see clearly.
- bright light hurting your eyes.
- pain when looking into the distance
- pain when looking close up.
- mild watering of the eye. Discharge or stickiness is not normally a sign.

What is the treatment for iritis?

Iritis usually responds well to eye drops, but they need to be used much at first. The types of drops normally used are:

Steroid eye drops to reduce the swelling inside your eye

The number of times you need to use these drops a day will depend on how bad your iritis is. This will be decided by the doctor or nurse.

These steroid drops must be reduced slowly over a few weeks, if not the iritis can become worse. Always shake the bottle before putting in your steroid drops.

In serious cases you may need an injection or be admitted to hospital for a few days.

You may find it helpful to

- use an alarm
- make a chart to be sure that you do not miss a dose.

Eye drops to make the pupil bigger

These drops will try and stop the swollen iris sticking to the other parts of your eye. They may blur your vision and make it difficult to read. This will wear off once you stop using them.

It is often possible to stop these drops much sooner than the steroid drops.

If you are having difficulty seeing clearly, speak to your doctor or nurse.

Eye pressure lowering medication

Sometimes, the pressure inside the eye goes up, either due to the swelling or in some cases due to the steroid drops that you have been taking for the iritis. Your doctor or nurse will keep an eye on the pressure and may give more eye drops to bring the pressure down again if needed.

Will I have to return for a check up?

Yes, you will need to come back for at least 1 follow-up appointment to make sure the treatment is working on your iritis. Iritis usually takes 2 to 4 weeks to get better, but you must carry on with the eye drops as directed. In cases where the condition is slow to settle, you may be referred to the outpatients clinic for further follow-up.

Is the iritis likely to come back?

Most people have a single attack of iritis, but the condition can come back in either eye. This can be weeks or even years later. You should contact your nearest eye hospital as soon as possible if you think it has come back. If it is found and treated in the early stages, it will clear up much more quickly.

Where can I get further information?

If you have any problems or questions, please ask any member of the medical team or nursing staff caring for you.

If you have any further questions, please call the Eye Casualty department on 0116 258 6273.

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