

What is uveitis of the eye?

Department of Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: December 2025

Next review: December 2028

Leaflet number: 925 Version: 3

What is uveitis?

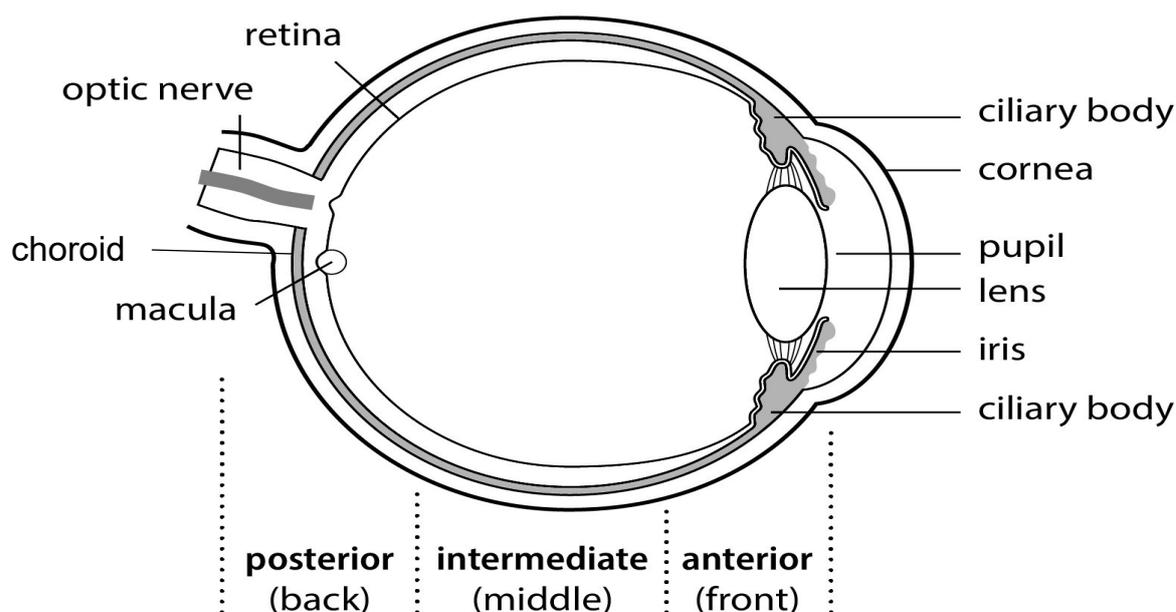
Uveitis covers a range of conditions which affect the inside of the eye.

“Itis” means inflammation. Uveitis means inflammation of the uvea.

The uvea is a layer inside the eye. It is made up of:

- The iris is the coloured part of the eye.
- Ciliary body helps the eye focus. This in the front of the eye (anterior).
- The choroid is a layer at the back of the eye (posterior).

This can be seen on the diagram below:



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Other parts of the eye may be affected by uveitis are:

- The retina. This senses light.
- The optic nerve which sends visual information to the brain.
- The vitreous (clear jelly) that fills the eye behind the lens.

Types of uveitis

Uveitis can be divided into 4 main groups:

1. Anterior: affects the front of the eye. This includes the iris and ciliary body. It is often called iritis.
2. Intermediate: affects the middle of the eye, mainly the vitreous.
3. Posterior: affects the choroid layer at the back of the eye.
4. Panuveitis: affects both the front and back of the eye.

Causes of uveitis

There are many possible causes of uveitis. They can be divided into 1 of 5 groups:

1. Idiopathic. There is no specific cause or link with other medical conditions. Up to 50% of cases can be idiopathic.
2. Autoimmune. Our immune system protects us from 'foreign' bodies like bacteria and viruses. In autoimmune disease this process goes wrong. The immune system attacks healthy parts of the body instead. This causes inflammation. It may be just the eye or may affect other parts of the body as well.
3. Other medical conditions. Uveitis may be linked with other medical conditions (often also autoimmune). This can be with sarcoidosis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis.
4. Infection. Many different kinds of infections may cause uveitis. The doctors need to know quickly if an infection is the cause. They can then make sure you get the right treatment.
5. Trauma. Some form of eye injury and also eye surgery.

Symptoms of uveitis

Symptoms will depend on the type of uveitis you have.

With **anterior** uveitis you may have:

- Pain
- Redness
- Sensitivity to light
- Blurring of vision

With **intermediate** and **posterior** uveitis you may have:

- No pain
- Black dots or wispy lines in your vision (floaters)
- Blurring of vision

How long will I have uveitis for?

- Some people will only ever have uveitis once.
- For many uveitis patients, this will happen again or be long term (chronic). It will need treatment over a long period of time.

Tests and diagnosis

We do the following to find out the exact type of uveitis you have:

- **Medical history.** We will ask you some questions about any past medical problems. These may suggest some possible causes or links with other medical conditions.
- **Eye examination.** We will measure your vision using the eye chart. You wear any glasses you normally wear. We will put eye drops into your eyes. These widen (dilate) your pupil. We can then look at the back of the eye for signs of inflammation or complications.

We will use a 'slit lamp' a type of microscope to look at your eye.

- **Medical tests.** We may do more tests to based on questions asked and / or eye examination. These tests may include blood tests and X-rays.

Treatment

The treatment of uveitis varies a great deal. It depends on:

- the type of uveitis you have
- how bad it is
- what complications are present

It is always best to have a written record of your treatment plan. You can follow it and talk about any changes to it.

The following are the usual treatment. But we may personalise treatment depending on the location and how bad the disease is.

Treatment of anterior uveitis:

This is usually treated with eye drops. The types of eye drops include:

- Dilating drops: They dilate the pupil. They help with pain. They help try and stop the iris sticking to the lens.
- Steroid eye drops: These are used to control the inflammation. They are given often at first. They are then slowly reduced over a longer period of time.

You must take all the drops. You must take them for the length of time the doctor says. Do not stop taking them just because your eyes feel better. You must finish the course advised by the clinician.

You must go to any follow-up appointments after a bout of uveitis.

Treatment of intermediate uveitis:

We will check on mild cases of intermediate uveitis. They may not need treatment if there are no complications.

More severe cases and those with complications (like macular oedema) will need treatments. These include injections around or in the eye, or tablets (steroids and / or immunosuppressants). If the front of the eye is inflamed as well, then you may need eye drops.

Treatment of posterior uveitis:

There are a few different types of posterior uveitis. Each is different. They each have their own treatment.

Eye drops cannot reach the back of the eye. We may give you tablets and sometimes injections if needed.

The main drug used is prednisolone. It is a steroid. This treatment starts with high doses of prednisolone. It is slowly reduced once the inflammation is controlled.

In some cases, we may give another drug called an immunosuppressant.

Complications of uveitis

The conditions below may happen in your eye due to uveitis:

- Cataract: a clouding of the lens.
- Secondary glaucoma: raised pressure inside the eye.
- Macular oedema: fluid build up at the back of the eye.
- Posterior synechiae: the iris sticking to the lens.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns or questions about this treatment you can contact:

Uveitis Nurse Specialist: **0793 997 8826**

Eye Casualty Department: **0116 258 6273**

Ophthalmology Secretary: **0116 258 6198**

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