

Ophthalmology department

# Anterior uveitis (iritis)

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about anterior uveitis (iritis) and answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us.

### What is anterior uveitis (iritis)?

This is a condition which is caused by inflammation of the front part of the eye around the iris, (the coloured part of your eye). Iritis refers to the same condition. It is a common condition which tends to happen again. Iritis / anterior uveitis can affect both eyes at the same time. If left untreated anterior uveitis can result in visual loss.

### What are the causes of anterior uveitis (iritis)?

Anterior uveitis (iritis) can be associated with other inflammatory conditions of the body. For example, anterior uveitis (iritis) is associated with ankylosing spondylitis, a condition that is caused by inflammation of the spine and pelvic joints sarcoidosis, which is associated mainly with inflammation in the lungs but also elsewhere within the body.

Certain infections, such as tuberculosis, may be associated with anterior uveitis (iritis). In some cases, patients may have particular genes (for example, HLA-B27) that make them more likely to have this condition.

Anterior uveitis (iritis) can also occur after eye surgery, including cataract surgery. It can also follow traumatic injury to the eye. However, in many cases, no cause of anterior uveitis (iritis) can be found.

### Signs and symptoms

Symptoms could include:

- eye pain
- sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- blurred vision

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Signs could include:

- eye redness
- unequal pupil sizes

## How we diagnose anterior uveitis (iritis)

It can be difficult to diagnose this condition without the appropriate equipment, which is usually not available at your GP's surgery.

So, it is important that the condition is treated at an ophthalmic clinic or ophthalmic casualty department to prevent complications.

A doctor will examine your eyes for signs of inflammation. The examination also involves the application of dilating eye drops to check for any inflammation at the back of the eye..At your visit, your doctor will ask you about any associated symptoms, for example, joint pain or persistent cough. Depending on this, some additional tests (including blood tests) may be requested to determine if there is a treatable underlying cause.

In most cases, no associated cause is found.

How we treat anterior uveitis (iritis)The doctor will prescribe anti-inflammatory eye drops. These may be used frequently at first, then gradually reduced over several weeks. You must not suddenly stop using the drops because the anterior uveitis (iritis) may return,

In most cases, you will be prescribed eye drops to help dilate your pupil. This is an important part of treatment to prevent the inflamed iris from sticking down to the lens of the eye.

This medication will:

- cause your vision to blur
- make it difficult for you to focus.
- may increase your sensitivity to light.

You may need to get intensive pupil dilating eye drops to ensure your pupil is dilated before you go home.

However, these eyedrops may not be necessary in some cases, particularly when the uveitis occurs after surgery.

Early treatment will ensure that inflammation is treated quickly, and the anterior uveitis/iritis begins to resolve.

## Who to contact for more information?

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- Emergency department at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3245
  - Outpatients at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3236
  - Outpatients at Charing Cross Hospital – 020 3311 1109/ 1233/ 0137

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

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