

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 refer to the same condition. It is a common condition which tends to recur. 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. Also, sarcoidosis, a condition associated mainly with inflammation within the lungs but also elsewhere within the body.

Certain infections such as tuberculosis may be associated with anterior uveitis (iritis) and in some cases, patients may have particular genes (e.g. HLA-B27) predisposing them to this condition.

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

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms could include:

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

Signs could include:

- eye redness
- Unequal pupil sizes

How is the condition diagnosed?

It is important that the condition is treated at an ophthalmic clinic or ophthalmic casualty department to prevent complications from occurring. It can be difficult to diagnose without the appropriate equipment, which is usually not available at your GP's surgery. A doctor will examine your eyes for signs of inflammation. The examination also involves the application of dilating eye drops in order to look for any inflammation at the back of the eye.

At your visit, your doctor will ask you about any associated symptoms e.g. joint pain or persistent cough. Depending on this, some additional tests (including blood tests) may be requested in order to determine if there is a treatable underlying cause. In the majority of cases, no associated cause is found.

How is the condition treated?

The doctor will prescribe anti-inflammatory eye drops which 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 recur.

In most cases, you will be prescribed eye drops to help dilate your pupil. This medication will cause your vision to blur and make it difficult for you to focus. It may also increase your sensitivity to light. It is an important part of treatment to prevent the inflamed iris from sticking down to the lens of the eye. You may need to get intensive pupil dilating eye drops to ensure your pupil is dilated before you go home. It may not be necessary to have these eye drops 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 can I contact for more information?

- 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 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

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

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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