

Many people go to the doctor with complaints about red eye. Red eye requires immediate medical attention so as to differentiate between causes that may threaten the vision. Red eye may also be a manifestation of a disease affecting the whole body.

What are the things to look out for if you have red eye?

Presence of a discharge:

Watery discharge is common with allergic problem, can also occur with virus infection. Color or pus like discharge may indicate bacterial infection that needs further evaluation.

Pain

Red eye accompanied with pain may be associated with increased pressure in the eye. Infection can also cause pain.

Change in the vision

If there is change in vision such as blurry vision or decreased vision that is new it should be evaluated.

Sensitivity to light (photophobia): when there is increased discomfort when the eye is opened to light, that makes you feel like avoiding bright light.

Persistent feeling of "something in the eye": a feeling like a foreign object present that makes it difficult to open the eye without difficulty. This is different from sensation of sand in the eye that tends to occur with allergy.

People who use contact lens: they can have injury to the eye with subsequent infection.

History of injury: Any form of recent injury to the eye with subsequent redness needs further evaluation.

Some Causes of Red eye

The clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye and lines the inner part of the eyelids is called the conjunctiva.

Conjunctivitis: inflammation or infection of the conjunctiva. It could be a result of allergy, viral or bacterial infection. Infective conjunctivitis is contagious. Presentation includes:

- Feeling of "something in the eye"
- Discharge and increased tearing
- maybe sensitive to light
- vision may also feel blurred

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- Treatment varies depending on the cause: antihistamines for allergic, symptomatic relief for viral, and antibiotics for bacterial.
- It can occur without any reason, but things that cause increased pressure (such as vomiting, sneezing, and coughing) make people prone to subconjunctiva hemorrhage.
- If you have high blood pressure, check to make sure it is well controlled.
- No definite treatment required. Artificial tears or eye drops can be used to relieve the itching.
- Resolves on its own within one to two weeks.
- Feeling of something foreign that cannot be gotten rid off in the eye.
- Sensitivity to light
- Blurry vision
- Treatment is antibiotics for bacterial causes and antiviral for that caused by herpes and shingles.
- Severe eye pain
- Headache
- Significant discomfort with or without vomiting
- Urgent medical attention required to prevent loss of vision in the eye.

Subconjunctiva hemorrhage (Bleeding into the conjunctiva): When the blood vessels under the conjunctiva bleed it causes painless bright redness of the eye. This is commonly referred to as having a blood shot in the eye. It is usually noticed by someone else or when you look in the mirror.

Keratitis: Inflammation or infection of the cornea.

It can be caused by viral (herpes simplex or varicella zoster) and bacterial infection. Keratitis can be part of generalized disease such as rheumatoid disease or other rheumatologic disease. People who wear contact lens are prone to keratitis because of possible injury to the cornea with introduction of bacteria. Presentation include

Acute Angle closure Glaucoma: sudden rise in the pressure in the eye. There is

Take Home Message

While the cause of red eye may be simple, not every cause can be managed without consulting the doctor. If you have one of the associated symptoms described above please seek medical advice. It is better to be overprotective of your eye than to loose your vision.

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This article is for educational purpose and it is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor.