



CARE OF THE EYE

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The eye is the lamp of the body (Matthew 6:22). It is one of the most vital in the human body and it is the light of the body. Therefore, there is need to care for the eye.

Many of the bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites that can invade the human body are also capable of infecting the exterior or interior parts of the eye. These infections account for a large proportion of the workload in eye clinic in hospitals. Cross infection may occur through contaminated instruments, hands, towels and droplets. People with dry eye or inadequate lid closure are more susceptible. Other risk factors include: low immunity, general diseased conditions, malnutrition and extreme ages.

Eye infections: Some of the common ones are- Conjunctivitis (bacterial and viral), Blepharitis, Keratitis, Uveitis, Retinitis, etc.

1. **Bacterial Conjunctivitis** is an irritation or inflammation of the outer membrane of the eye ball and inner eye lid (bulbar and palpebral conjunctiva). When caused by bacteria or viruses, it is commonly known as infectious conjunctivitis. Bacterial conjunctivitis is usually caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*, it is more common in children. The signs and symptoms are sticky, purulent discharge, foreign body sensation, with peripheral conjunctival redness. The pupils are normal and the cornea is clear. The visual acuity is usually unaffected unless there is corneal complication. Bilateral purulent discharge in the newborn requires urgent referral as this may indicate infection with *Neisseria gonorrhea* or possibly *Chlamydia*. The patient and parental sexual partners must be examined and treated as soon as possible. *Neisseria gonorrhea* infection may result in loss of sight if treatment is delayed.

2. **Blepharitis** is an inflammation of the eyelids that affects the eyelashes or tear production. It commonly occurs when the tiny oil glands (meibomian glands) of the inner eye lids becomes inflamed and it often occurs along with other skin conditions. *Staphylococci* and *propionibacteria* are the common causative pathogens. Signs and symptoms are red, crusty lid margins, mild lid

swelling, itchiness, dry sensation and occasional lacrimation. Vision is normal unless the cornea becomes involved. The condition commonly occurs in unhealthy environments or in those with skin problems. Daily lid 'scrubs' and a healthy diet are essential in managing this chronic disorder. A course of antibiotic eye ointment may be prescribed.

3. **Keratitis** is an infection of the cornea (the clear layer in the front of the eye) by common pathogens found on the skin, in the mouth and nose. Normally, these pathogens cannot penetrate the outer layer of the eye. However, eye injury, lack of oxygen due to contact lenses, infection from using contact lenses too long or a weak immune system can facilitate entry into the cornea. Infections that may damage the cornea include: syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, herpes simplex, hepatitis B, tuberculosis, leprosy, mumps, measles, etc.

4. **Uveitis** is the inflammation of the middle layer of the eye which is made of the iris, ciliary body and choroid. Uveitis usually is not serious, but more severe cases can lead to permanent vision loss. Therefore early diagnosis and treatment are important to prevent complications and preserve vision. Uveitis caused by pathogens is known as infectious uveitis

Uveitis come on suddenly and get worse quickly. The symptoms include; eye redness, eye pain, light sensitivity, blurred vision, dark floating spots in field of vision and decreased vision. This condition can affect one or both eyes, and it can affect people of all ages even children.

Uveitis is classified by where the inflammation occurs in the eye:

- Anterior uveitis (front of the eye).
- Intermediate uveitis (middle of the eye).
- Posterior uveitis (back of the eye).
- Pan-uveitis (all parts of the eye)

Infections that may damage the uvea include: syphilis, gonorrhoea, chickenpox, etc.

5. **Retinitis** is the inflammation of the retina (a thin layer of tissue that lines the back the eye on the inside). Infectious retinitis is an inflammation of the retina resulting from

infection by viruses, bacteria, fungi, or parasites. These pathogens affect patients differently depending on characteristics like age, location, and immune status. Treatment is aimed at preventing permanent vision loss and protecting the fellow eye. Some patients with infectious retinitis will notice "floaters" or decreased vision, while others have no symptoms at the time of diagnosis.

Pathogens and infections that can affect the retina include: syphilis, gonorrhoea, AIDS, tuberculosis, etc

General Principles of Infection Control

1. Practice personal hygiene and observe basic principles to control/prevent transmission of infections.
2. Individuals with any infection should not have direct contact with other people.
3. Hands are the most important 'instruments' of infection transmission. Therefore, hand washing must be done at all times.
4. Do not rub dirty hands into your eyes.
5. Please see your doctor if you notice any eye infection for immediate treatment.

Conclusion

Eye infection can be spread through simple social greeting i.e., shaking of hands.

It is advisable for everyone to visit the eye doctor for periodic refraction to know the state of the eye. Issues concerning the eyes should not be taken with levity.

Therefore, take care of your eyes.

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