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Chemosis

Chemosis is swelling of the tissue that lines the eyelids and surface of the eye (conjunctiva).

Considerations

Chemosis is a sign of eye irritation. The outer surface of the eye (conjunctiva) may look like a big blister. It can also look like it has fluid in it. When severe, the tissue swells so much that you can't close your eyes properly.

Chemosis is often related to allergies or an eye infection. Chemosis can also be a complication of eye surgery, or it may occur from rubbing the eye too much.

Causes

Causes may include:

- Angioedema
- Allergic reaction
- Bacterial infection (conjunctivitis)
- Viral infection (conjunctivitis)

Home Care

Over-the-counter antihistamines and cool compresses placed on the closed eyes may help with symptoms due to allergies.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Call your health care provider if:

- Your symptoms do not go away.
- You can't close your eye all the way.
- You have other symptoms, such as eye pain, change in vision, difficulty breathing, or fainting.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

The provider will perform a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms, which may include:

- When did it start?
- How long does the swelling last?
- How bad is the swelling?
- How much is the eye swollen?
- What, if anything, makes it better or worse?
- What other symptoms do you have? (For example, breathing problems)

Your provider may prescribe eye medicine to reduce swelling and treat any conditions that may be causing the chemosis.

Alternative Names

Fluid-filled conjunctiva; Swollen eye or conjunctiva

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