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Heterochromia

Heterochromia is different colored eyes in the same person.

Considerations

Heterochromia is uncommon in humans. However, it is quite common in dogs (such as Dalmatians and Australian sheep dogs), cats, and horses.

Causes

Most cases of heterochromia are hereditary, caused by a disease or syndrome, or due to an injury. Sometimes, one eye may change color following certain diseases or injuries.

Specific causes of eye color changes include:

- Bleeding (hemorrhage)
- Familial heterochromia
- Foreign object in the eye
- Glaucoma, or some medicines used to treat it
- Injury
- Mild inflammation affecting only one eye
- Neurofibromatosis
- Waardenburg syndrome

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Talk to your health care provider if you notice new changes in the color of one eye, or two differently colored eyes in your infant. A thorough eye exam is needed to rule out a medical problem.

Some conditions and syndromes associated with heterochromia, such as pigmentary glaucoma, can only be detected by a thorough eye exam.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

Your provider may ask the following questions to help evaluate the cause:

- Did you notice the two different eye colors when the child was born, shortly after the birth, or recently?
- Are any other symptoms present?

An infant with heterochromia should be examined by both a pediatrician and an ophthalmologist for other possible problems.

A complete eye exam can rule out most causes of heterochromia. If there doesn't seem to be an underlying disorder, no further testing may be needed. If another disorder is suspected diagnostic tests, such as blood tests or chromosome studies, may be done to confirm the diagnosis.

Alternative Names

Differently colored eyes; Eyes - different colors

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