

Subconjunctival haemorrhage

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What is a subconjunctival haemorrhage?

A subconjunctival haemorrhage is a bleed underneath the conjunctiva: the transparent layer which lies over the white of the eye (the sclera). This bleeding (haemorrhage) is caused by the leaking of a blood vessel in the conjunctiva.

What are the symptoms?

- Sudden appearance of a red patch or spot on the white of the eye. This can be quite alarming as sometimes a large part of the white of the eye appears red. This is because the blood can easily spread underneath the conjunctiva.
- The haemorrhage may be flat or occasionally slightly raised above the surface of the eye
- Painless: the condition is usually painless, but occasionally can cause an ache or discomfort
- Normal vision: the condition does not affect your eyesight
- You may not notice it until someone else draws your attention to it or you see it in the mirror

What causes a subconjunctival haemorrhage?

Subconjunctival haemorrhages are very common because the blood vessels in the conjunctiva are very fragile and can easily bleed. In most cases, there is no specific cause but the following are associated with the condition:

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- High blood pressure
- Strenuous activities (heavy lifting)
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Vomiting

Other causes include forcefully rubbing the eye or an eye injury. Subconjunctival haemorrhage can also occur after eye operations.

Blood thinning medication such as aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, apixaban or rivaroxaban may make the haemorrhage larger.

What is the treatment?

The bright red appearance can be worrying but subconjunctival haemorrhage is a harmless condition and does not usually require any treatment. It will settle by itself in approximately two to three weeks.

If your eye is uncomfortable lubricating eye drops or ointment may be recommended.

The practitioner may recommend a blood pressure check.

If you suffer from repeated subconjunctival haemorrhages or notice any other unusual bleeding please see your GP.

How do I contact the hospital?

If you require advice please telephone the Ophthalmic Outpatient Department between 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 01423 542217.

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Further Information

Other sources of useful information can be found at:

NHS www.nhs.co.uk

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust website www.hdft.nhs.uk

National Eye Institute <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/>

Feedback

If you have a concern, complaint or compliment, or would like to provide feedback regarding your experience of the Ophthalmology Service / clinic, please contact the Patient Experience Team via the following:

Patient Experience helpline 01423 555499 (Monday – Friday 9.30am – 4pm)

E-mail: hdft.patientexperience@nhs.net

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