

Oxford Eye Hospital

# Episcleritis and Scleritis

Information for patients



# Episcleritis

The front, white part of the eye (known as the sclera) is covered by transparent membrane called the conjunctiva. Between these tissues is another transparent layer called the **Episclera**. This layer contains blood vessels which can dilate or enlarge, resulting in redness of the eye called **Episcleritis**.

**Scleritis** is not as common as Episcleritis but is a more serious condition because the inflamed vessels are deeper in the eye. This can lead to a thinning of the sclera and the choroid (underlying layer) to become visible, resulting in a bluish appearance. Often Scleritis can affect the back portion of the eye which makes it difficult to detect.

## What are the causes?

The cause is unknown in most cases, although some people suffering from conditions such as Rheumatoid arthritis and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus may be more likely to get Episcleritis / Scleritis.

It normally affects one eye at a time and can vary from no symptoms or a mildly red eye and to the eye being irritable to causing severe pain.

# What are the symptoms?

The symptoms include:

- Redness
- Pain
- Sensitivity to light
- Tenderness in the eye
- Watering of the eye

## How is it diagnosed?

This condition can only be confirmed following an assessment at the Eye Hospital using slit lamp examination.

## Treatment

Episcleritis often requires no treatment but in some cases a course of steroid eye drops is required. In severe cases a follow up appointment is arranged at the Eye Hospital to ensure the inflamed blood vessels are subsiding. Depending on the severity of the condition a course of eye drops will last from 2 weeks. Episcleritis can recur, but it is worth noting that this is not a sight threatening condition.

Scleritis will require longer term & more frequent management which can involve oral steroids and immunosuppressive drug therapy. Patients with scleritis are generally long terms patients at the Eye Hospital.

# Questions or concerns

If you have any questions concerning your eye condition or treatment, please do not hesitate to contact the Eye nurses on:

Telephone: (01865) 234800

Eye Emergency

or

Telephone: (01865) 234117

Eye Out-Patients Department

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **[PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk)**

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