



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Iritis

Information for patients



Oxford Eye Hospital

What is iritis?

This is an inflammatory condition affecting the iris, (the coloured part of your eye). It is also known as anterior uveitis. It can be associated with other inflammatory conditions of the body, for example arthritis, but in most cases the cause is unknown.

It is a common condition which tends to recur (come back). Although it usually only affects one eye at any one time, it is important to know that iritis can affect either eye.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- aching, painful red eye
- small pupil
- blurred vision
- sensitivity to light

What is the treatment?

It is important that this condition is treated at an **ophthalmic casualty department** (eye emergency department). It can be difficult to diagnose without special equipment which is not available at your doctor's surgery.

If left untreated the eye would become increasingly more painful and vision may be permanently affected if complications (including glaucoma, induced cataract and swelling of the retina) develop.

The eye doctor will prescribe anti-inflammatory drops. These may be used frequently at first, and then gradually less frequently – according to the doctor's instructions. You must not suddenly stop using the drops, or the iritis may recur. You may also need to use an anti-inflammatory ointment at night.

You will be given drops to dilate your pupil (enlarge it). This will cause blurred vision and difficulty in focusing (particularly for reading), and may also increase your sensitivity to light. This is a vital part of the treatment for iritis. If the pupil is not dilated, the inflamed iris will stick to the lens, which can lead to complications.

You may require intensive pupil dilating drops in the casualty department to make sure your pupil is dilated before you go home.

How long does it take to clear up with the treatment?

The condition can take from a few days to weeks to clear up, depending on the severity of the condition. The earlier treatment commences the less time iritis will take to clear up.

Signs to look out for

If you have a future attack of iritis, it is essential that you seek **early treatment** at an **ophthalmic casualty department** to prevent complications from developing.

The sooner treatment is started, the easier iritis is to treat, and the quicker the inflammation will settle.

How to contact us

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

Tel: **01865 234567**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Rebecca Turner, Oxford Eye Hospital
March 2022
Review: March 2025
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

