

Iritis

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about iritis. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is iritis?

Iritis is a common condition caused by inflammation of your iris (the coloured part of your eye). It can affect either eye, but usually only affects only one eye at any one time. Usually, once you have had iritis, it will come back at a later stage; however, some people only ever get it once.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Aching, painful red eye made worse in bright light or when trying to read.
- Blurred vision.

What causes iritis?

We do not know the cause of iritis. In half of cases, iritis only occurs in the eye but in the other half it is associated with other inflammatory conditions of the body, for example arthritis. It is occasionally associated with an infection.

How is it diagnosed?

It is diagnosed by examining your eye with a microscope, which is why your doctor has referred you to the eye department at Guy's and St Thomas'.

The ophthalmologist (specialist eye doctor) or nurse will examine your eye thoroughly using the microscope. They will also put some drops into your eye so they can see the back of the eye. These eye drops will make your vision blurred for around two to three hours. You must not drive while your vision is affected. You can wait in the eye department until the drops have worn off before returning home, or you can ask a friend or relative to accompany you home.

In some cases the eye doctor will order blood tests and x-rays to see if we can find out why you have iritis.

How is iritis treated?

Iritis is treated with eye drops. The ophthalmologist or nurse will show you how to use the drops properly. There are two types of drops that are commonly prescribed by the eye doctor. **You should always refer to the manufacturer's package insert for details of side effects.**

The first type of drops will make the pupil of your eye dilate (get bigger). The drops will help to relieve pain and rest the eye, but will temporarily blur your vision, especially for reading and close work. However, since we usually put the drops in only one eye you will be able to drive. The blurring will last the whole time that you are being treated with the eye drops – treatment usually lasts for one or two weeks. Once the treatment is

completed, your pupil size will slowly return to normal and the blurred vision should go. This may take a few days if you have very brown eyes.

The second type of eye drops is a steroid-based medication. These reduce the inflammation, help with healing, and will not blur your vision. It is important that you use these drops regularly and that you do not stop the treatment suddenly. Steroid eye drops may need to be reduced gradually depending how long you have been using them for – your doctor will give you more information about this.

Occasionally, if your iritis is very bad, you may have to come back to the eye clinic for an injection of steroids around the eye.

Do not use eye drops that have been open for more than four weeks. They may no longer be sterile and could cause an eye infection.

Attacks of iritis last for varying lengths of time but most attacks subside within 6–8 weeks. Your symptoms should disappear within a few days but you will need to take the treatment for longer while the inflammation subsides. It is very rare for iritis to permanently damage your vision.

You will need to come back to the eye casualty department/rapid access clinic for a follow-up appointment so that we can check on your progress. We will give you details of your follow-up appointment before you leave the clinic. If the inflammation does not go away, you will be referred to a specialist clinic.

If the treatment appears to be making the problem worse, please return to the eye casualty department/rapid access clinic as soon as possible so that we can review the treatment.

What happens if I do not get treatment?

The pain and light sensitivity may increase. Your vision may also become worse.

Is there anything else I can do to help?

Wearing tinted spectacles or sunglasses will help to relieve any light sensitivity caused by the dilating eye drops.

What should I do if the iritis comes back?

Come back to the eye casualty department/rapid access clinic as soon as possible. Do not restart any previous treatment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you develop any of the symptoms featured in this leaflet, or need urgent advice about your eye(s), please telephone the Ridley Clinic on 020 7188 4304, Monday to Friday, 9 to 5pm, or 020 7188 7188, Monday to Friday, 9 to 4pm and ask for eye casualty.

Outside of clinic hours, call 020 7188 7188 and ask to be put through to accident and emergency.

Further information

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk