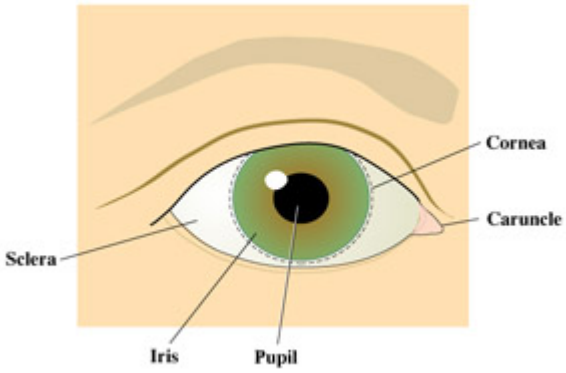
Scleritis and Episcleritis

The outer part of the eyeball is covered with a tough fibrous covering called the sclera. It is the white part of the eye. This tough covering also has a thin membrane lying on top of it called the episclera.

- When the sclera becomes red and sore (*inflamed*), it is called *scleritis*.
- When the episclera becomes inflamed, it is called *episcleritis*.



CAUSES

- *Scleritis* is usually more severe and is associated with autoimmune diseases such as:
  - Rheumatoid arthritis.
  - Inflammations of the bowel such as Crohn's Disease (regional enteritis).
  - Ulcerative colitis.
- *Episcleritis* usually has no known cause.

SYMPTOMS

Both scleritis and episcleritis cause red patches or a nodule on the eye.

DIAGNOSIS

This condition should be examined by an ophthalmologist. This is because very strong medications that have side effects to the body and eye may be required to treat severe attacks. Further investigations into the patient's general health may be necessary.

TREATMENT

- Episcleritis tends to get better without treatment within a week or two.
- Scleritis is more severe. Often, your caregiver will prescribe steroids by mouth (*orally*) or as drops in the eye. This treatment helps lessen the redness and soreness (*inflammation*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take all medications as directed.
- Keep your follow-up appointments as directed.
- Avoid irritation of the involved eye(s).
- Stop using hard or soft contact lenses until your caregiver tells you that it is safe to use them.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Redness or irritation gets worse.
- You develop pain or sensitivity to light.
- You develop any change in vision in the involved eye(s).

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