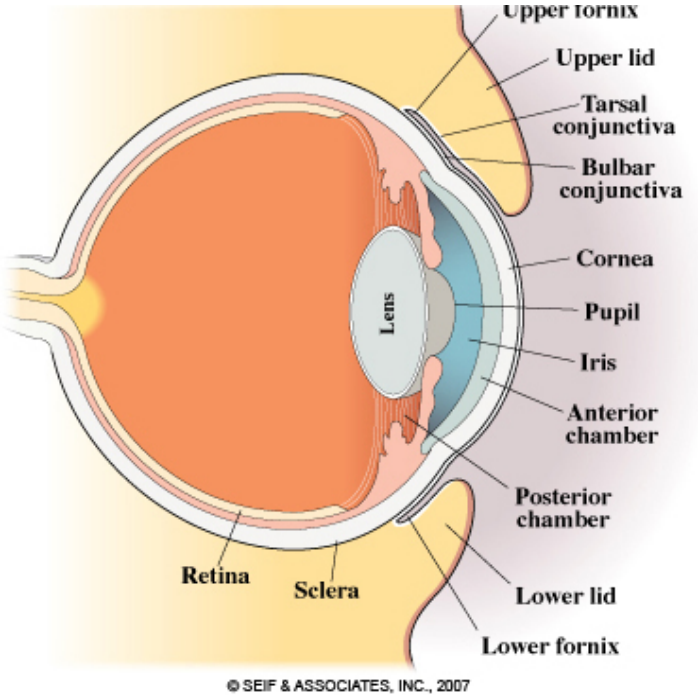
Uveitis

The uveal tract (*uvea*) is a layer of the eye made up of three structures:

- The choroid - a layer containing the eye's blood vessels located between the outer white part of the eyeball (*sclera*) and the inner layer (*retina*).
- The iris - the colored portion of the eye.
- The ciliary body - a area of muscle at the base of the iris that helps focus the lens.



Uveitis happens when any or all portions of the uveal tract become inflamed.

- **Iritis** is when the iris becomes inflamed. It is the most common form of uveitis. It is extremely important to treat iritis early, as it may lead to internal eye damage causing scarring or diseases such as glaucoma. Some people have only one attack of iritis (in one or both eyes) in their lifetime, while others may get it many times.
- **Pars planitis** is when the ciliary body becomes inflamed.
- **Choroiditis** is when the choroid layer becomes inflamed. If the inflammation also involves the retina, it is called **chorioretinitis**.
- **Panuveitis** is when inflammation affects all of the structures of the uveal tract.

CAUSES

- Diseases where the body's immune system attacks tissues within your own body (*autoimmune diseases*).
- Infections (tuberculosis, gonorrhea, fungus infections, Lyme disease, infection of the lining of the heart).
- Trauma or injury.
- Eye diseases (acute glaucoma and others).
- Inflammation from other parts of the uveal track.
- Severe eye infections.
- Other rare diseases.

SYMPTOMS

Iritis

- Eye pain or aching.
- Light sensitivity.
- Loss of sight or blurred vision.
- Redness of the eye. This is often accompanied by a ring of redness around the outside of the cornea or clear covering at the front of the eye (*ciliary flush*).
- Excessive tearing of the eye(s).
- A small pupil that does not enlarge in the dark and stays smaller than the other eye's pupil.
- A whitish area that obscures the lower part of the colored iris. Sometimes this is visible when looking at the eye.

Since iritis causes the eye to become red, it is often confused with a much less dangerous form of "pink eye" or conjunctivitis. One of the most important symptoms is sensitivity to light. Anytime there is redness, discomfort in the eye(s) and extreme light sensitivity, it is extremely important to see an ophthalmologist as soon as possible.

Pars Planitis

- Mild, progressive drop in vision.
- Floating spots in the field of vision in front of the eye.
- Development of a cataract.

Choroiditis

- May have no symptoms.
- Progressive drop in vision.
- Loss of vision in an isolated area of peripheral vision (*scotoma*) or to the side.
- Sore, aching eye.

TREATMENT

Iritis

- Corticosteroid eye drops and dilating agent eye drops are often given. Corticosteroid eye drops are used to decrease inflammation. Dilating drops help to prevent scarring of the iris and the risk of the iris becoming "stuck" to the front surface of the lens. Follow your caregivers exact instructions on taking and stopping corticosteroid medications (drops or pills).
- Sometimes, the iritis will be so severe that it will not respond to commonly used medications. If this happens, it may be necessary to use steroid injections. The injections are given under the eye's outer surface. Sometimes oral medications are given. Treatment used for iritis is usually made on an individual basis.

Pars Planitis

- If mild, no treatment may be required
- Corticosteroids are usually given orally or for severe cases, injections are given under the surface of the eye.

Choroiditis

- If associated with an underlying disease, the disease itself is treated.
- Corticosteroids are usually administered by mouth (*orally*).
- Corticosteroid injections or other medicines specific are given to treat the cause of infection or inflammation. These injections are given into the interior cavity of the eye (*intravitreal injection*).
- If caused by a parasite or worm that can be seen by the ophthalmologists, laser treatments may be used to kill the parasite.

Panuveitis

- Treatment depends upon the cause and severity of the inflammation. It may consist of any one, or a combination of the treatments outlined above.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Your caregiver will give specific instructions regarding the use of eye medications or other medications. Follow all instructions in both taking and stopping the medications.

SEEK IMMEDIATE CARE IF:

- You have redness of one or both eyes.
- You experience a great deal of light sensitivity.
- You have pain or aching in either eye.
- You notice a drop in vision in either eye.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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