

Patient information: accident and emergency

Episcleritis

Episcleritis is a common condition affecting the episclera, the layer of tissue between the surface membrane (conjunctiva) and the firm white part of the eye (the sclera). In episcleritis, the episclera becomes inflamed and red. It often causes irritation, soreness or a gritty sensation. Episcleritis can be recurrent.

What causes episcleritis?

The cause of episcleritis is mostly unknown. It sometimes flares up when you are tired, have been reading or working for long periods on computers, or are in a dry, dusty environment. Very rarely, it may be due to an underlying inflammation in your body; this can be investigated by blood tests if the episcleritis is severe and recurrent.

What is the treatment?

In most cases, episcleritis recovers on its own and may not need any treatment, but the symptoms can be relieved by using artificial tear drops. If it persists and causes significant discomfort, you may need a short course of steroid drops to help it clear.

When to seek advice

If your eyesight becomes blurred or the pain is severe, you should call Moorfields Direct for advice on 020 7566 2345 or go to your local A&E department for a further examination. You could also go to Moorfields A&E department, open 24/7 (for emergency eye problems **only**).

Authors: Miss Melanie Hingorani,
Dr Swan Kang and Linda Langton
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**Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust**
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

