

# Red eye

Red eye is usually minor and not urgent. There can be several different causes. After examining you today, your optometrist has found that you have the condition indicated below.

## ☐ Subconjunctival haemorrhage

### **What is a subconjunctival haemorrhage?**

The front part of the eye is covered by a thin, clear membrane called the conjunctiva. There is a network of blood vessels that lie under the conjunctiva. If one of these blood vessels bursts, the blood pools and spreads. A relatively small amount of blood can spread within a small gap under the conjunctiva, covering a large space and making your eye suddenly look very bloodshot.

### **Treatment**

A subconjunctival haemorrhage will usually get better on its own within a week or so. If your eye feels uncomfortable, lubricating drops and a cool compress can help.

## ☐ Episcleritis

### **What is episcleritis?**

The episclera is a thin layer of tissue on the white of the eye that lies under the conjunctiva, the clear tissue over the white of the eye. Sometimes this tissue can become inflamed, causing blood vessels to be more prominent and the eye to look red.

### **Treatment**

Episcleritis will usually get better on its own within seven to 10 days. A cold compress and ibuprofen tablets can help reduce the inflammation and lubricating eyedrops may make your eye feel more comfortable. In more severe cases, your optometrist or doctor may prescribe steroid eye drops or other anti-inflammatory medication. If you have had several episodes of episcleritis, you may be referred for blood tests to rule out any underlying health causes.

## ☐ Pterygium

### **What is a pterygium?**

A pterygium is a pinkish, triangular-shaped thickening of fleshy tissue that develops on the conjunctiva, the clear tissue over the white of the eye. It may spread to the cornea, the clear central part of the eye.

### **Treatment**

Protecting your eyes from UV light is important to slow down the growth of the pterygium and reduce discomfort related to inflammation. Lubricating eye drops (artificial tears) can also help reduce the irritation. Your optometrist may suggest lubricating drops for the day and a thicker ointment to use at night. You may need to be referred to a specialist to have the pterygium removed if it is having a significant effect on the cornea.

## ☐ Pinguecula

### **What is a pinguecula?**

A pinguecula is a small, raised, yellowish bump that develops on the conjunctiva (the clear tissue over the white of the eye) on either side of the cornea (the clear central part of the eye). It can sometimes cause the eye to be slightly red in this area. It usually affects both eyes.

### **Treatment**

Treatment is not usually necessary for a pinguecula, but lubricating eye drops (artificial tears) may help reduce any discomfort. Your optometrist or doctor may prescribe steroid eyedrops if there is inflammation. Protecting your eyes from UV light is advised to reduce the risk of inflammation.

### **About the AOP**

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the voice of the optical profession, representing over 80% of practising optometrists. The AOP elevates the work of its members, safeguards their interests, and champions eye health across the UK. For more information, visit [www.aop.org.uk](http://www.aop.org.uk)

## ☐ Ectropion

### ***What is an ectropion?***

An ectropion is when the eyelid does not make proper contact with the front of the eye and instead turns outwards. When this happens, the exposed eye can become red and irritated.

### **Treatment**

In mild cases, treatment is not always needed. If the front part of the eye continues to be exposed, lubricating drops or ointments will help. Your optometrist may advise taping your eyes shut at night. In more severe cases, you may be referred for surgery to reposition the eyelid.

## ☐ Entropion

### ***What is an entropion?***

An entropion is when the eyelid begins to turn inwards. This can cause the eyelashes to rub against the front surface of the eye.

### **Treatment**

Lubricating eyedrops can help. You may be referred for surgery to correct the entropion if it is affecting the front part of your eye.

## ☐ Red eye caused by wearing contact lenses

### ***What is red eye caused by wearing contact lenses?***

Sometimes people who wear contact lenses can experience red eye and some discomfort.

### **Treatment**

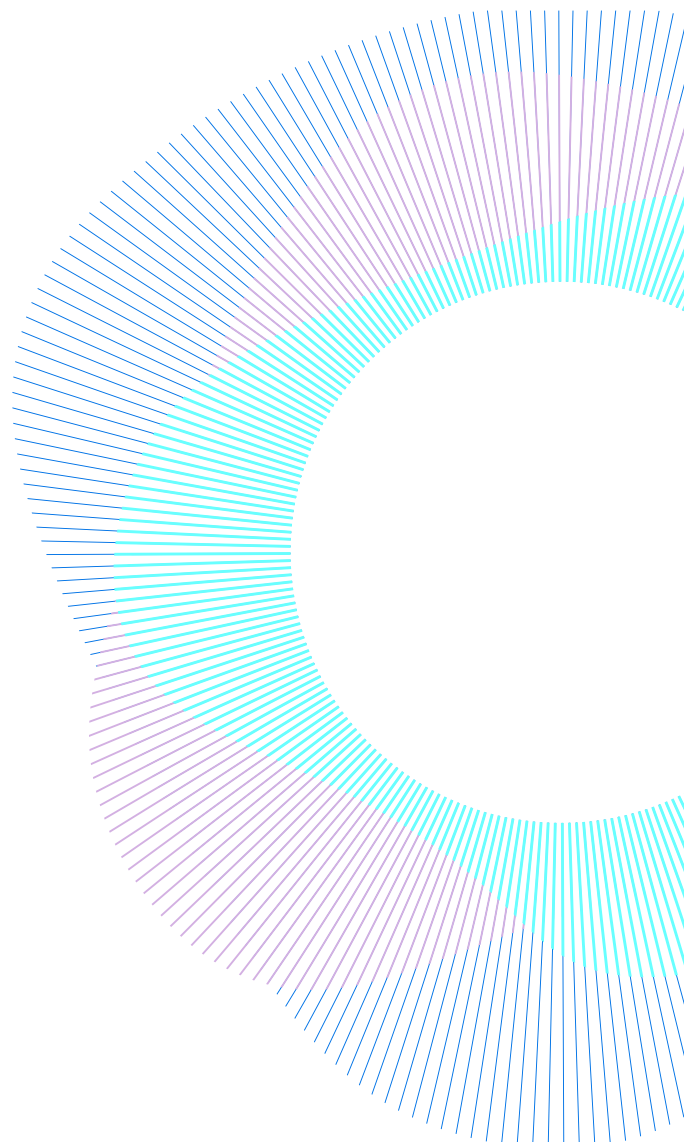
You should stop wearing your contact lenses until an optometrist or optician tells you otherwise. You will be closely monitored to make sure there is no infection. You may need to stop wearing your contact lenses for as long or be refitted with a different type of lens. If there are signs of an infection, you may be prescribed eye drops or referred to a specialist.

## Further reading

We have produced separate leaflets on the following conditions that can also cause a red eye.

- Allergic conjunctivitis
- Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis
- Dry eye
- Scratched cornea

For more information on our patient leaflets, visit [www.aop.org.uk/leaflets](http://www.aop.org.uk/leaflets).



### **About the AOP**

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the voice of the optical profession, representing over 80% of practising optometrists. The AOP elevates the work of its members, safeguards their interests, and champions eye health across the UK. For more information, visit [www.aop.org.uk](http://www.aop.org.uk)