

## **Acute red eye: Take it seriously**

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*The Tribune, (Health and Fitness) New Delhi, Wednesday, January 10, 2007.*

A patient came with acute pain and redness in the left eye since 3 days. The vision was also blurred since then. The patient has done self-medication and waited to improve for 3 days. The patient was examined and found to have an acute attack of glaucoma. The patient recovered partially after the management, but she has lost 2 lines of vision as she did not come early.

A red eye is attention catcher and even if you don't notice it somebody is going to tell you about your red eye. So these patients usually report to us early.

Common causes of red eye are:

- Acute Conjunctivitis
- Corneal Ulcer
- Acute congestive glaucoma
- Acute iridocyclitis
- Acid/ Alkali burns

Acute conjunctivitis is the commonest cause of red eye. Often other conditions are assumed to be conjunctivitis and there is delay in the initiation of proper treatment. This can lead to loss of vision in conditions like acute congestive glaucoma and acute iridocyclitis.

Acute conjunctivitis is usually associated with discharge, yellow in cases of bacterial conjunctivitis. It is highly infectious and transmitted by touch or by linen. Antibiotic drops usually help but one should consult an eye specialist. The viral conjunctivitis is associated with less discharge. It is common after rainy season.

The corneal ulcer usually has an acute presentation as the pain is severe and is associated with blurred vision. There is history of injury before the redness. The corneal ulcer is an emergency as it has a risk of eye perforation if it is not treated in time or properly. So one should get the eyes checked if there is any history of foreign body entry or injury to the eye.

Acute congestive glaucoma is a condition where the eye pressure shoots up above normal because of the insufficient drainage of the fluid within the eye. This acute rise is injurious to the optic nerve. The ischemic damage to the optic nerve in acute attack is reversible only if it is treated in time. Otherwise it leads to permanent damage to the optic

nerve and loss of vision. The patient also has associated acute pain in eye, headache, nausea and vomiting. The treatment is done with pressure lowering medicines.

Acute Iridocyclitis also causes red eye with pain in the eye and blurring of vision. There can be floaters and photophobia. The acute attack should be treated in time. The treatment is usually done with steroid drops and so proper diagnosis is important. This condition is known to recur and patient can get cataract at an early stage or secondary glaucoma.

The management of all these conditions is different. Steroids which are given in iridocyclitis, will flare up conjunctivitis if it is not diagnosed correctly.

So any red eye is not conjunctivitis and self medication should not be done. One should get his eyes checked properly to initiate a proper treatment for red eye.

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