UVEITIS

What is uveitis?

Uveitis is inflammation that occurs within a certain layer inside of the eye, called the uvea. The uvea is a layer of tissue that resides within the thick, white wall, called the sclera, which makes up the outer coating of the eye wall itself.

What purpose does the uvea serve?

The uvea primarily contains blood vessels that help to nourish different parts of the eye, such as the retina and iris (the part of the eye that gives it it's "color"). Inflammation within the uvea can damage the parts of the eye it serves if the inflammation is severe or untreated.

How would I know if I had uveitis?

Symptoms of uveitis can include light sensitivity, blurred or decreased vision, pain, and redness of the eye. It can occur in one or both eyes, and some or all of the symptoms may be present.

Why do people get uveitis?

There are many different types and causes of uveitis. The type depends on the part of the eye affected. For example, if the iris is inflamed, this is called iritis. If the retina is inflamed, this is called retinitis.

Causes can include infections, such as the virus that causes chicken pox or shingles, fungus, such as histoplasmosis, bacteria, such as syphilis, or even parasites that can cause toxoplasmosis. Certain medical conditions such, as arthritis, can cause different types of uveitis as well. Past injury to an eye can also result in uveitis in the same or even the unaffected eye. In most cases, however, the cause may remain unknown.

How is the cause of uveitis diagnosed?

Occasionally, your eye doctor may be able to tell just by examining your eyes. More often, your eye doctor will need to order special tests to determine the exact cause. This may include ordering blood tests or special x-rays, or having you see your primary doctor or another specialist to evaluate your overall health.

How is uveitis treated?

It primarily depends on the cause and the part of the eye that is involved. If the uveitis is caused by an infection, antibiotics would probably be used to treat it. Some times uveitis can be treated with medications that decrease inflammation in general, such as steroids. Treatment is often administered in many different forms, from eye drops, to pills, and sometimes even injections, or surgery. Your eye doctor will be able to tell which treatment is right for your condition. Uveitis, if severe or not treated, can sometimes be very damaging to the inside of the eye and lead to vision impairment or blindness.