Intermediate Uveitis

What is uveitis?

Uveitis occurs when the middle layer of the eyeball gets inflamed (red and swollen). This layer, called the uvea, has many blood vessels that nourish the eye. The uvea has three layers. Intermediate uveitis affects the middle layer of the uvea and the clear gel that fills the center of the eyeball. Intermediate uveitis can damage the blood vessels in the uvea, leading to vision loss.

What are symptoms of intermediate uveitis?

Symptoms of intermediate uveitis can include:

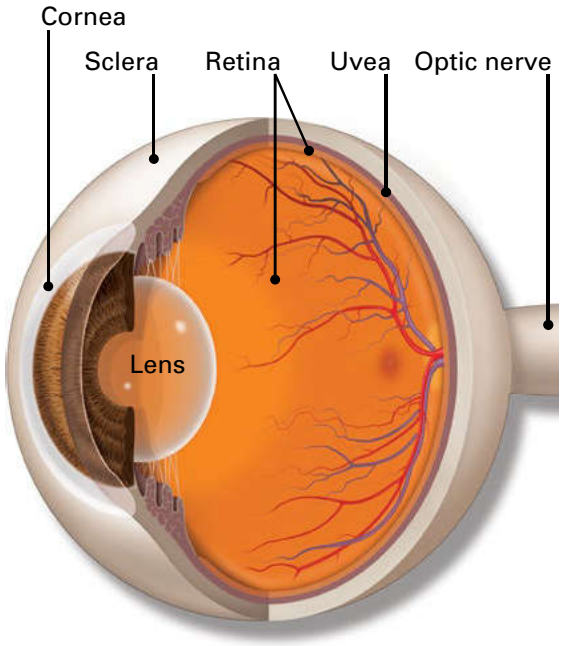
- having blurry vision
- seeing "floaters" (black specks or moving clouds in your vision) all of a sudden
- mild eye pain

Symptoms can last for a few weeks to many years. Intermediate uveitis can go through cycles of getting better, then getting worse. Contact your ophthalmologist right away if you notice any of these symptoms.

What causes intermediate uveitis?

You are more likely to get intermediate uveitis if you have or have had:

- a sexually transmitted disease called syphilis
- an infection of the lungs called tuberculosis



- a systemic inflammatory disease such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBS), or sarcoidosis
- an infection called Lyme disease, which is caused by a tick
- a disease called multiple sclerosis that affects the brain and nerves throughout the body

Smoking may (cigarettes, cigars or pipes) also increase your risk of getting intermediate uveitis. In 50 percent (half) of intermediate uveitis cases, no cause is found.

How is intermediate uveitis diagnosed?

Your ophthalmologist will examine the inside of your eye. Since uveitis is often connected with other diseases or conditions, some tests may be needed. They may include a physical exam, blood or skin tests, and examination of eye fluids. There may be imaging tests done. Tests like X-rays, CT scans, fluorescein angiography, or optical coherence tomography (OCT). Your ophthalmologist may ask about other diseases or health problems you have had.

How is intermediate uveitis treated?

Intermediate uveitis needs to be treated right away to prevent lasting problems. Ophthalmologists often treat intermediate uveitis with medicine (corticosteroids) that reduces pain and swelling. This medicine may be given by injection (shots) or taken by mouth. In some cases, a tiny steroid implant is placed in the eye. This device slowly releases medicine that reduces inflammation. Other drugs to weaken the immune system might also be used. Sometimes surgery is advised to remove the gel from the back of the eye to reduce inflammation.

When intermediate uveitis is caused by an infection, an antibiotic may be given to fight the infection.

Often times, your ophthalmologist will work with a special kind of doctor to help treat you. This doctor is a rheumatologist.

Summary

Intermediate uveitis is inflammation of the uvea in the middle of the eye. You are more likely to get intermediate uveitis if you have had certain diseases or infections. Symptoms include blurry vision and floaters. This is a serious condition that must be treated immediately to save vision. Treatment often includes injections, medication taken by mouth, or steroid implants.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Get more information about uveitis from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at **aao.org/uveitis-link**.

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