Subconjunctival Hemorrhage

What is a subconjunctival hemorrhage?

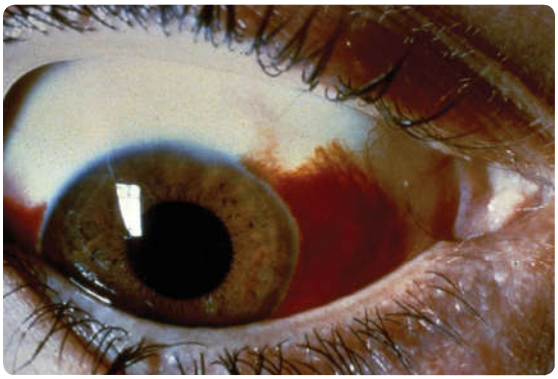
Subconjunctival hemorrhage is when one or more blood spots appear on the white of your eye. The eye's conjunctiva contains a lot of tiny blood vessels that can break. If they break, blood leaks between the conjunctiva and sclera. This bleeding is the bright red spot that you see on the white of your eye.

These blood spots can look scary. But a subconjunctival hemorrhage is usually harmless and often heals on its own.

Eye Words to Know

Sclera: The outer layer of the eye. This is the "white" of the eye.

Conjunctiva: Clear tissue that covers the sclera and inner surface of the eyelids.



A subconjunctival hemorrhage is a bright blood spot on the white part of the eye.

What are subconjunctival hemorrhage symptoms?

Usually the only symptom of subconjunctival hemorrhage is a red spot in your eye. In fact, you may not know you have it until you look in the mirror. You may experience a very mild irritation of the eye.

What causes subconjunctival hemorrhage?

Coughing, sneezing, straining, or other similar actions most commonly cause subconjunctival hemorrhages. This is because they briefly raise blood pressure in your veins. That quick pressure rise can cause capillaries to break.

Trauma to the eye can also cause subconjunctival hemorrhage. Even rubbing your eyes too hard might cause capillaries to break.

Less common causes of subconjunctival hemorrhage include:

- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- medicines that can make you bleed easily (such as aspirin or blood thinners like Coumadin®)

Rarely, subconjunctival hemorrhage is caused by a blood clotting disorder or other blood problem that affects your whole body.

How is subconjunctival hemorrhage treated?

Subconjunctival hemorrhage should heal on its own without treatment. Depending on how big your spot is, this may take a few days or a few weeks.

If your eye feels irritated, you may use artificial tears.

If you get subconjunctival hemorrhages often, your ophthalmologist will talk with you about further testing.

Summary

Subconjunctival hemorrhage is a blood spot on the white of your eye. It looks serious, but it is usually harmless. Subconjunctival hemorrhage is caused by a broken blood vessel in the eye, which often happens when coughing, sneezing or straining leads to a quick rise in blood pressure. Trauma to the eye—even rubbing your eye too hard—can also cause subconjunctival hemorrhage.

A subconjunctival hemorrhage will heal on its own without treatment within a few days to a few weeks.

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 subconjunctival hemorrhage from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at **aao.org/subconjunctival-hemorrhage-link**.

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