

Subconjunctival Hemorrhage

What is it?

The conjunctiva is like a thin skin on the front of the eyeball. It covers the white part of the eye (the sclera) but does not cover the central part of the eye (the cornea). In between the conjunctiva and the sclera run tiny blood vessels. If you look closely at the "whites" of the eyes you may just be able to see a few tiny blood vessels. If one of these tiny blood vessels bursts, it bleeds in between the conjunctiva and the sclera. This is called a subconjunctival hemorrhage.

What causes them?

In the vast majority of cases there is no apparent cause. Older people tend to have them most. Very occasionally an injury to the eye can cause one. Sometimes they occur after a coughing bout. Rarely they are associated with high blood pressure.

What are the symptoms?

Usually none. It is often not noticed until someone points it out or it is seen in the mirror. It can seem rather alarming, as sometimes a large part of the white of the eye appears red and bloodshot. This is because the tiny hemorrhage (bleed) spreads between the conjunctiva and the sclera in a thin film. It looks a lot worse than it really is! The central part of the eye, the cornea, is never affected and so vision is unaffected. It is not uncommon for it to happen again at a later date.

Treatments

No treatment is required. They usually fade and disappear within 2 weeks (like any other "bruise" the red color will go a yellow/brown before it fades away). Do mention to the doctor if:

- You have not had your blood pressure checked recently.
- You suspect an injury to your eye is the cause (for example, a small bit of flying metal from a hammer, chisel *etc.*).
- You have noticed any other unusual bleeding or bruising of the body for no good reason. This would be rare.