

SUBCONJUNCTIVAL HEMORRHAGE

Subconjunctival hemorrhage means that there is bleeding from a broken blood vessel underneath the conjunctiva, the transparent membrane that covers the eyeball. Though it looks frightening, it is almost always harmless.

The amount of blood may be so small that at first it is barely noticeable. But later it can look like it's spreading, which may alarm you. Rest assured that the amount of blood is not increasing. It is like pouring a teaspoon of red paint on a white kitchen counter and then covering it with glass. The paint spreads out under the glass, which makes it look like more than there really is.

A subconjunctival hemorrhage will not affect your vision. There is no way this blood can enter the inside of your eye.

What causes the Hemorrhage?

A small blood vessel may burst when you strain suddenly, such as when lifting something heavy, sneezing, coughing, vomiting, or straining on the toilet. Very rarely, the bleeding may be associated with a generalized bleeding tendency, such as in severe anemia.

Treatment

By the time you first see the hemorrhage, the bleeding has already stopped. The blood will gradually disappear by itself, but it may take as long as two weeks to absorb completely.

You may be able to hasten the absorption process by using warm compresses on the eye after the first 24 hours—but no sooner. Using heat too soon risks more bleeding.

You should not have any pain, but if your eye itches or feels irritated, you can use a decongestant eye drop that can be purchased over-the-counter.