

Allergy to phenylephrine eye drops.

It is very common during an eye examination to have eyedrops instilled to dilate the pupils. This is an essential part of the ophthalmic examination because the pupil is like a curtain to the eye and one has to open the curtains to look at the retina and the back of the eye. To do this commonly tropicamide eyedrops and phenylephrine eyedrops used to dilate the pupil.

Occasionally people can be allergic to these eyedrops and that they find when they get home that the eyes become red and itchy or sore and that this progresses overnight and lasts several days. They may even assume in error that they have picked up an eye infection at a hospital. However eye infections such as viral conjunctivitis takes a week to develop whereas an allergy begins hours or the next day.

The most common eyedrops to be allergic to is phenylephrine. To test this we sometimes we instil a drop tropicamide into one eye and Phenylephrine into the other I and observe the reaction.

Allergic reactions are quite potent in the eye and do take many days to settle without treatment. I usually give patients dexamethasone eyedrops every two hours reducing as the redness settles.

If you develop red eyes after an eye consultation it is always prudent to return or to be seen in an eye casualty as the other cause of red and painful eyes after dilatation drops is closed angle glaucoma. However this usually reduces blurred vision and pain in the eye but is much more serious.

Mr. Nicholas Lee

Lead Ophthalmic Clinician at The Hillingdon Hospital

Consultant Ophthalmologist at The Western Eye Hospital

(NHS Net Email nicklee1@nhs.net)

References

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Allergic contact blepharoconjunctivitis due to phenylephrine eye drops.

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