

Subconjunctival Hemorrhage

A subconjunctival hemorrhage is when a blood vessel in the white of your eye, called the conjunctiva, leaks blood below the surface and causes a pronounced red eye. It often looks serious and scary, but is almost always harmless.

It often is caused by bouts of sneezing, coughing, straining, or other events that result in a rapid rise of blood pressure. Trauma or even rubbing the eye too hard can also cause a subconjunctival hemorrhage. It can also happen for no reason at all. Medical conditions, such as hypertension and diabetes, can increase your risk of having a subconjunctival hemorrhage. Blood thinners, such as Plavix, Pletal, Coumadin, Pradaxa, aspirin, or medication that have aspirin in it (Excedrin), significantly increase the risk of a subconjunctival hemorrhage. Blood thinners will also make the severity of it much worse. If a subconjunctival hemorrhage is recurrent in nature, blood work would be recommended.

It is not uncommon for the eye to be slightly irritated. This happens because the surface becomes irregular and causes dryness. Artificial tears may be used if your eye feels irritated. It is very important to understand that subconjunctival hemorrhages should NEVER cause significant eye pain, discharge, or vision loss. Any significant eye pain, discharge, or vision loss means that you should be seen immediately by your eye doctor to be evaluated for other more sight threatening conditions.

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