Patient Information - Glaucoma

Bleb related infection

What is a bleb related infection?
You have undergone trabeculectomy surgery and a ‘bleb’ was created in the white part of your eye under the upper eyelid.
It is a trap-door that allows fluid to drain out of the eye to reduce the pressure inside the eye, which helps treat your glaucoma. Infection can occur at the site of the operation. There are two main types of infection, called ‘blebitis’ and ‘bleb related endophthalmitis’. Blebitis is an infection confined to the bleb, and ‘bleb related endophthalmitis’ when this infection spreads into the eye, which is far more severe and can cause blindness if not treated promptly.

How common are these infections?
Bleb related infection is a relatively uncommon condition, occurring in about one to five people out of every 100 people who have trabeculectomy surgery in a given year.

What are the symptoms?
Common symptoms include eye pain, redness of the eye, reduced vision, pain on looking into light and discharge from the eye.

What do I do if I have any of these symptoms?
Go to your nearest eye casualty immediately!

What happens if I don’t seek medical help?
Bleb related endophthalmitis can cause the eye to go irreversibly blind in a short period of time. In the long term, infection can cause failure of the glaucoma surgery.

What are the causes for getting a bleb related infection?
Having a bleb leak, suffering from conjunctivitis or dry crusty eyelid margins (blepharitis), having had a previous bleb related infection, wearing of contact lenses, having had a second operation on the bleb, the use of antibiotics, and having diabetes.
What is the treatment?
This depends on what type of infection you have. If you have blebitis, you will be admitted to the hospital and given a combination of antibiotic steroid eye drops. You will also be given antibiotics to take by mouth. If you have a bleb related endophthalmitis you will be given the same treatment, but also be given injections of antibiotics and a steroid into the eye, and steroid tablets to be taken by mouth.

How can I prevent myself from getting a bleb related infection?
If you suffer from dry crusty eyelid margins, eye infections or dry eye, these need to be treated and be kept under control with regular treatment and reviews by your ophthalmologist. Do not rub your eye or touch the bleb.

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Moorfields Direct telephone helpline
Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm, for information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)
Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325
Email: pals@moorfields.nhs.uk
Moorfields’ PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you sort out any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks
Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to start their consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further – see above for contact details. For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, please visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs.