

Dear Patient,

Allergic conjunctivitis, commonly called eye allergy, is an ailment which not only affects your eyes but also impairs your social and professional life. With increased urbanisation and pollution, the severity of this disease has also increased.

This patient education booklet includes some common and very important queries of patients suffering with eye allergy (allergic conjunctivitis) along with their answers. If you are also suffering from eye allergy, then you will find this booklet very useful in knowing your disease stage better.



Patient: Doctor, you mentioned that I am suffering from allergy. Can you tell me what is allergy and how does it occur?

Doctor: Different people are allergic to different things. Usually, allergic reactions are caused by small particles like dust, mite, pollens, etc., when they come in contact with your eyes.

Patient: Doctor, you said various things can cause allergy. Are they all the same or are there any differences?

Doctor: Just like each person is allergic to different things, the reactions also vary with everybody. Based on what is the cause and the symptom, allergy is categorised into five types:

1) Urban allergy: In large cities, pollution from motor vehicles and factories is a major cause of allergic reactions. The problem is aggravated during winters since cold layer surrounds hot and polluted air, which keeps on circulating at the lower levels. Continuous exposure of eye to dust particles and poisonous gases may even lead to surface damage of the eyes.



2) Seasonal allergy: This commonly happens to people who are genetically allergic to pollens, molds, grass, flowers, etc. During summer, pollens, and in autumn, molds and grass lead to allergic reactions.

3) Perennial allergy: This is the most common type of allergy. Most of the time, it happens because of environmental irritants like:

- Dust
- Mites
- Foreign bodies
- Smoke
- Chemicals and polluted gases
- Pet dander, etc.



4) Giant Papillary Conjunctivitis (GPC): In this type of allergy, large bumps (papillae) appear on the underside of the eyelid.

GPC is thought to be caused by one or more of the following:

- Allergic reactions to contact lenses or to the chemicals used to clean contact lenses
- Rubbing of the contact lens against the eyelid
- Deposits on the lenses



GPC rarely occurs in people who wear artificial eyes or have exposed sutures (stitches) in their eye.

If you wear contact lenses and have asthma, hay fever or other allergies, you may be more prone to getting GPC.

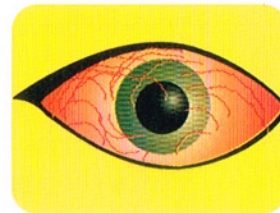
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5) Atopic Keratoconjunctivitis: This type of allergy is associated with dermatological problems like eczema, dandruff, dermatitis and scabies. This disease mostly travels through the eyebrows, eyelashes and then to the eyelids. Consequently, because of continuous rubbing, it leads to damaged cells.

Symptoms of Eye Allergy:

- Itching
- Burning
- Tearing
- Lid swelling
- Photophobia (Sensitivity to light)
- Grittiness because of large bumps underneath the eyelid.
- Appearance of mucus
- Redness in some people
- Blurred vision (In GPC, due to mucus sticking to the contact lens)

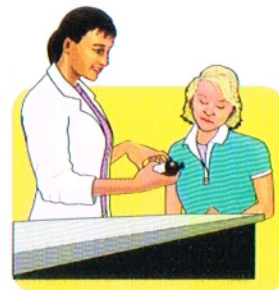


Patient: Doctor, how does allergy affect vision?

Doctor: If proper care is not taken, allergy can damage the eye tissue and the cornea (the clear front window of the eye) as the large bumps underneath the eyelid rub against the eye.

Patient: Doctor, I have tried a number of medications including steroids. As long as I am using steroids, my eyes are comfortable but the moment I stop using medication, all the symptoms like itching, redness, etc. reappear. Why does it happen? Do I need to use steroids life-long?

Doctor: Steroids provide immediate relief and help reduce the initial severity of the disease. Long-term use of steroids can have serious side-effects.



Patient: By using your prescribed medication, will these symptoms disappear immediately and forever?

Doctor: Surely, these symptoms will disappear, though it may take some time for complete cure. You may need to use this medication for 2-3 months.

Remember, eye allergy can be an ongoing problem. If you notice symptoms of allergy returning, see your ophthalmologist (eye doctor) immediately.

Patient: If redness, itching and other visible symptoms disappear, can I stop using medication?

Doctor: No. As you rightly mentioned, "visible symptoms occur when the disease is in its worst stage. But rather than symptomatic treatment, you need treatment of underlying changes occurring in the eye. That takes a longer time and requires you to continue the treatment for a longer duration.

Patient: Doctor, are these medications expensive?

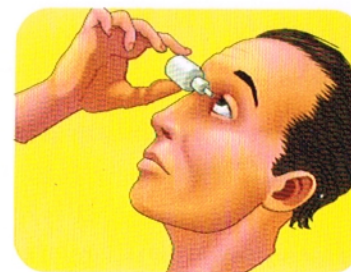
Doctor: As per my understanding, you need a complete and permanent treatment of allergy so that you may work and live comfortably. There are some inexpensive medicines available in the market but their efficacy and safety in the long-term is not proven; hence trying them on your precious eyes is not advisable.

Eyes are one of the most sensitive organs of your body and are extremely precious. Hence, using proven medications from only reputed eye care companies is recommended, even if they are a little costly.



Important things to remember in the treatment of Allergy

- Use eyedrops as suggested by your doctor
- Maintain proper hygiene
- During GPC, stop wearing contact lenses for several days or weeks to let the irritation heal and disappear
- Clean your contact lenses more frequently with enzymes rather than preserved lens solutions and switch to unpreserved salt solutions



"Your ophthalmologist will work with you to find the best way to treat your eye allergy (Allergic Conjunctivitis)"