



Weill Cornell Medical College

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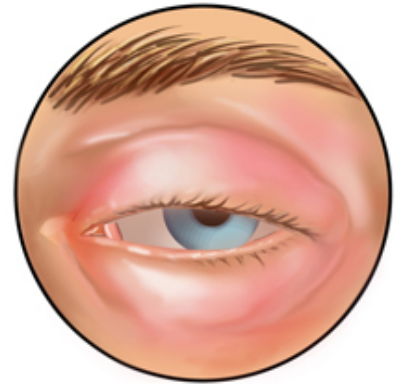
Patient Education:

Orbital Cellulitis

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Orbital Cellulitis

Orbital cellulitis is an infection in the eye socket (*orbit*) and the tissues that surround the eye. The infection can spread to the eyelids, eyebrow area, and cheek. It can also cause a pocket of pus to develop around the eye (*orbital abscess*). In severe cases, the infection can spread to the brain. Orbital cellulitis is a medical emergency.



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CAUSES

The most common cause of this condition is a bacterial infection. The infection usually spreads to the eye socket from another part of the body. The infection may start in:

- The nose or sinuses.
- The eyelids.
- Facial skin.
- The bloodstream.

RISK FACTORS

This condition is more likely to develop in people who have recently had one of the following:

- Upper respiratory infection.
- Sinus infection.
- Eyelid or facial infection.
- Eye injury.
- Infection that affects the entire body or the bloodstream (*systemic infection*).

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of this condition usually start quickly. Symptoms include:

- Eye pain that gets worse with eye movement.
- Swelling around the eye.
- Eye redness.
- Bulging of the eye.
- Inability to move the eye.
- Double vision.
- Fever.

DIAGNOSIS

This condition may be diagnosed based on your symptoms and an eye exam. You may also have tests to confirm the diagnosis and to check for an orbital abscess. Other tests (*cultures*) may be done to find out what type of bacteria is causing the infection. Tests may include:

- Complete blood count (CBC).
- Blood culture.
- Nose, sinus, or throat culture.
- Imaging studies such as a CT scan or MRI.

TREATMENT

This condition is usually treated in a hospital. Antibiotic medicines are given directly into a vein through an IV tube.

- At first, you may get IV antibiotics to kill bacteria that often cause orbital cellulitis (*broad spectrum antibiotics*).
- Your medicine may be changed if cultures suggest that another antibiotic would be better.
- If the IV antibiotics are working to treat your infection, you may be switched to oral antibiotics and allowed to go home.
- In some cases, surgery may be needed to drain an orbital abscess.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take medicines only as directed by your health care provider.
- Take your antibiotic medicine as directed by your health care provider. Finish the antibiotic even if you start to feel better.
- Return to your normal activities as directed by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
- Keep all follow-up visits as directed by your health care provider. This is important.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your eye pain or swelling returns or it gets worse.
- You have any changes in your vision.
- You have a fever.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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