

Docs sound conjunctivitis alert

Swimming pools often to blame for severe variant of eye infection

NEW DELHI: Doctors at city hospitals sounded an alarm against the rise of viral conjunctivitis cases in the past two months. Unhygienic swimming pools are the most common agents of this infection, said doctors.

The condition, which is different from allergic conjunctivitis, can directly affect vision. "Every day at least three cases of viral conjunctivitis are being reported at our hospital which is higher than the usual mark. It turns worse when patients treat it as a routine infection and come for the check-up at a later stage. The adenovirus, which causes epidemic keratoconjunctivitis (EKC) or viral con-

The rise in the number of conjunctivitis cases has been observed since March. This takes four- five weeks to subside

conjunctivitis, can virulently attack the cornea and affect vision," said Dr A K Grover, chairperson of ophthalmology department of Sri Ganga Ram Hospital.

Rise since March

The rise in the number of such cases has been observed since March. This infection takes four- five weeks to subside.

"There has been a sporadic rise in the number of complicated viral conjunctivitis cases this year. Patients do not realise they need medical help and end up using steroid eye drops which worsens the condition. However, allergic conjunctivitis is common in summer and it settles down easily," said Dr Ranjana Mithal, senior consultant ophthalmologist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals.

People are most vulnerable to this infection because of swimming pools are not properly chlorinated. Exposure to direct sun rays, use of contact lens for long periods and low hygiene levels are the other factors which can commonly lead to eye irritation.

"Children and young adults are the most vulnerable to this eye infection. Sometimes it takes more than a year for this infection to subside. We are cautioning patients that before taking a dip they should check the hygiene level adopted by the authorities of the swimming pool. Wearing glasses while watching 3 -D movies, rubbing eyes and handshakes should be avoided," said Dr A K Raina, ophthalmologist at Saket City Hospital.

The other two common problems reported across hospitals are corneal ulcer and dryness of eyes.

While Apollo Hospital has reported a 30 per cent increase in cases of dry eyes, at least two cases of corneal ul-

cer are being recorded every week at Sri Ganga Ram Hospital.

Proper sunglasses

While wearing a sunglass is recommended by doctors, cheap glasses from roadside stalls may be harmful for eyes.

"The sunglasses which cannot provide enough protection to eyes from the ultraviolet (UV) rays during summer would damage eyes. Among the elderly, the exposure to strong UV rays may lead to cataracts, a clouding of the lens and macular degeneration, which is the leading cause of vision loss," said Dr Sanjay Dhawan, director of ophthalmology, Fortis Healthcare.

DH News Service