

Got conjunctivitis? It may affect cornea

Sumati.Yengkhom@timesgroup.com

Kolkata: A more virulent form of conjunctivitis is stalking Kolkata this season. Not only is it taking a longer time to heal, in many cases it is affecting the cornea, causing temporary blurring of the vision.

This condition, in which the cornea is inflamed, is called 'keratitis' — different from the primary infection where only the conjunctiva is affected. The combined condition is called 'keratoconjunctivitis'.

"Viral conjunctivitis is affecting many in Kolkata now. A simple conjunctivitis does not cause much problem except for the irritation and discomfort in the eye. But it is the secondary infection keratoconjunctivitis — a condition in which the cornea is also affected — which gives us reason to worry. We are getting people with inflamed cornea," said Dr Nandini Ray, eye specialist at Fortis Hospital.

What is conjunctivitis?

An infection caused by **adenovirus**, where only the outermost layer of the eye — conjunctiva — is inflamed

What is the threat this season?

In at least one out of 10 cases, the infection is spreading to the cornea, a condition known as 'keratitis'. The combined condition is called '**keratoconjunctivitis**'

How is it different from conjunctivitis?

Not only is it taking a longer time to heal, it may cause **temporary blurring of the vision**

In case of the usual conjunctivitis, which is caused by adenovirus, inflammation occurs only in the outermost layer of the eye called conjunctiva. An antibiotic drop or ointment along with a lu-

THREAT TO EYES

What are the symptoms?

If irritation in the eye is accompanied by a problem in vision, the infection may have spread till the cornea. **If this condition persists, consult an ophthalmologist without delay**

Who are the most vulnerable?

Those with a **weak immune system**

Is it contagious?

Yes, just like the usual conjunctivitis. Patients as well as those around them should take precautions



warn doctors.

"If the irritation in the eye is accompanied by a problem in vision, it is an indication that the infection has spread till the cornea. And if this condition persists, the patient should immediately consult an ophthalmologist," cautioned Dr Gautam Bhaduri, director at Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Kolkata.

On an average, doctors are finding at least one case of cornea infection in every 10 conjunctivitis cases. Moisture-laden air serves as the perfect breeding ground for adenovirus. Therefore, the peak monsoon is considered to be the time when the virus thrives.

"Though most cases of conjunctivitis occur during the rains, the virus can attack any time and those with a weak immune system are the most vulnerable. The infection is contagious and patients as well as those around them should take precautions," said Baduri.

bricant to ease the discomfort is all that a patient needs to use until the virus dies on its own in about four days to a week. But if the infection is severe and persists, the cornea could be affected,