



For Your Health

HEALTH INFORMATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY KAISER PERMANENTE

IRITIS

IRITIS is a descriptive term for an inflammatory disorder of the colored part of the eye (iris). Sometimes iritis is just one symptom of a disease that affects other organ systems: arthritis and spinal degenerative disease, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, Lupus, and other collagen vascular diseases, bowel disturbances such as ulcerative colitis and regional enteritis, sarcoid, and certain other very rare infections. Most often, however, iritis appears by itself.

The **symptoms** of iritis include light sensitivity, red eye, blurred vision, tearing, pain, and sometimes floaters. The pupil may appear smaller in the affected eye when compared to the normal pupil. Frequently iritis is a recurrent problem; after a few episodes patients become very astute at early diagnosis. Iritis is sometimes confused with conjunctivitis, a much less serious disorder of the clear outer lining of the eye.

The secrets to the successful **treatment** of iritis are EARLY DETECTION and proper choice of MEDICINES. THERAPY consists of cortisone and dilating drops. These medicines quell the inflammation and reduce the scarring that can occur. Persistent cases may require more intensive treatment, such as injections of cortisone into the soft tissues around the eye. These injections help to avoid the potential serious systemic side effects of large doses of oral cortisone. Other oral medicines are being investigated to better understand their role in treating this disease. Aspirin may prove to be very helpful here.

In serious cases, **complications** may arise. Cataracts, glaucoma, and corneal changes are possible consequences of both the disease and the medicines used to treat it. The best advice is: "Just enough medicine to get the job done, but not too much." Careful observation is needed in the resolving phase to monitor potential problems. If the medicines are withdrawn too rapidly, a recurrence is very possible.

