

Ocular manifestations of COVID-19

Ocular manifestations have been observed in patients with COVID-19.

Conjunctivitis is the most common ophthalmic manifestation reported.

Ocular symptoms can appear just before the onset of respiratory symptoms. However, conjunctivitis can also be the sole sign of COVID-19 infection, with no other systemic manifestations of the disease.

– What is COVID-19 conjunctivitis?

COVID-19 conjunctivitis is a viral form of conjunctivitis.

Viral conjunctivitis is an eye condition caused by infection of the conjunctiva, the transparent membrane that forms the inner lining of the upper and lower eyelids and covers the sclera, the white part of the eyeball.

The conjunctiva is a thin, highly vascularized, semi-transparent tissue. When the small blood vessels in the conjunctiva get inflamed, they become more visible, and this is what causes the eye to appear red.

– What are signs and symptoms?

COVID-19 related conjunctivitis can affect one or both eyes. Eyes are usually red and swollen.

Symptoms include

- foreign body sensation (the feeling that something is in the eye) or gritty sensation (irritation that feels like sand in the eye)
- burning sensation
- pain
- sensitivity to light
- watery discharge

– The risk

The detection of COVID-19 in tear samples of patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection has raised concerns that the respiratory disease can be transmitted through ocular secretions.

COVID-19 can spread through the eyes, just as it does through the mouth or nose. When someone infected with coronavirus coughs, sneezes, or talks, virus particles can spray from their mouth or nose onto somebody else's face and the droplets can enter the body through the eyes.

Early diagnosis of COVID-19 conjunctivitis can help limit its spread.

- Treatment

There are no specific treatments for COVID-19 conjunctivitis. The viral form is usually self-limited and clears up on its own within weeks. Placing a cool, wet washcloth on your eyes can help make them feel more comfortable.

Lubricant eye drops, gel or ointment may help reduce discomfort and grittiness, but will not reduce the duration of the illness.

Steroid eye drops are occasionally used in severe cases upon medical prescription.

Do	Don't
Wash the hands regularly	Do not share towel and pillows
Use clean towel or tissue when wipe the face and the eyes	Do not touch the eyes
Wash pillow and towels in hot water and detergent	Do not use contact lenses
Throw away your eye cosmetics	Do not use eye make up