

Virulent conjunctivitis may take a year to heal

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Graphic: Shailesh Warang

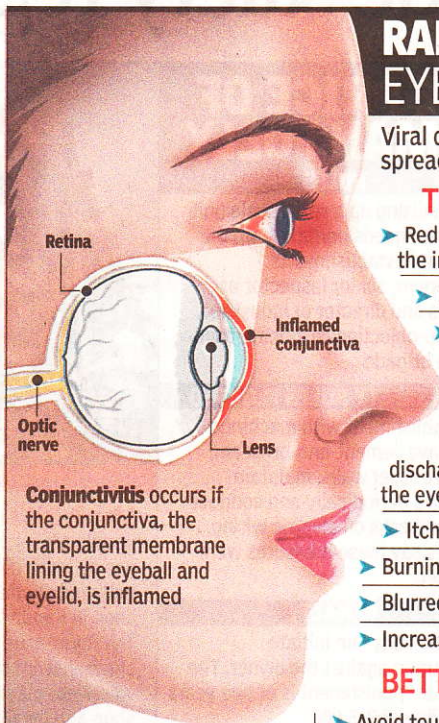
Vile Parle resident Advait Shah (name changed) became alarmed when he began experiencing a loss of vision after suffering conjunctivitis for over two weeks in January. One visit to an ophthalmologist had not helped. He rushed to another and was diagnosed to be suffering from nummular keratitis, a condition in which there was tearing and photophobia, apart from blurred vision.

"Even with my shades on, I had trouble teaching. My students lagged behind in their syllabus because of my eye problems. The college had to ultimately arrange for a substitute teacher," said Shah, a professor. Shah has not yet completely recovered. He still has an opaque spot in his eye.

Dr Kavita Rao, cornea and refractive surgeon at Aditya Jyot Hospital, said, "There are multiple viruses that otherwise affect the eye. The adenovirus-8 is an uncommon strain. Though the conjunctivitis caused by this virus may resolve in two to three weeks, the antigen may remain in the cornea and cause further problems."

Adenovirus-8 eye infections, currently affecting many Mumbaiers, crop up after every few years, say doctors. Dr Phiroze Patel, ophthalmologist at Jaslok Hospital, said vision once blurred by the virus, takes a long time to return to normal. "The virus causes small, fine corneal spots and tear. A few patients take even six months to a year to recover," he said, adding adenovirus conjunctivitis is seen after every two years or so. "It affects in clusters," he added.

Melina Gomes, for instance, had a tough time containing the disease. First her husband suffered from conjunctivitis in February, followed by her two-year-old son. "A week after my third son, I contracted the conjunctivitis, followed by my other two sons aged 10 and four. Each one of us suffered for more than two weeks each. But we got a scare when my second son started bleeding from



Conjunctivitis occurs if the conjunctiva, the transparent membrane lining the eyeball and eyelid, is inflamed

➤ Viral conjunctivitis is highly contagious. But maintaining proper hygiene such as frequently washing your hands should minimize the risk of transmission

IN FOR A LONG HAUL?

➤ Advait Shah, a college professor, was suffering from what he thought was a 'regular strain of conjunctivitis,' since January

➤ After a week of sore eyes, he consulted a doctor, who prescribed steroids, but his condition worsened

➤ He had pain in the cornea as he suffered from nummular keratitis, a

the eye after suffering for a week. We rushed him to the doctor, who said that there was actually no treatment, except to wait for the virus to run its course," said Melina, who still has a blurry vision and itchy eyes sometimes.

Dr Sanjay Dhawan, from the All India Ophthalmological Society, said the virus strains keep mutating, which makes it even more difficult for the body to fight it out.

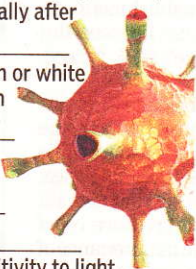
"Normally 50 strains of virus

RARE VIRUS HAS EYE ON VISION

Viral conjunctivitis can easily spread from person to person

THE SYMPTOMS

- Redness in the white of the eye or the inner eyelid
- Increased volume of tears
- Thick yellow discharge that crusts over the eyelashes, especially after sleep
- Green or white discharge from the eye
- Itchy eyes
- Burning eyes
- Blurred vision
- Increased sensitivity to light

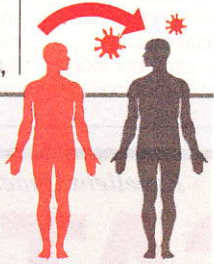


BETTER STAY SAFE

➤ Avoid touching your face

➤ If someone in your house has conjunctivitis, avoid sharing any washcloths, towels,

pillowcases, mascara or eyeliners with the person



condition marked by tearing, photophobia and blurred vision, which can last up to a year

➤ Now treated by another doctor, the swelling in his eyes is gone, but a spot of opacity remains on his cornea

cause conjunctivitis, but recently, a particular type, adenovirus-8 has been circulating. The mutation makes the virus even more dangerous," he said, adding that a sharp pain in the eyes and sensitivity to light in those suffering from eye flu should not be ignored.

"Patients should avoid self medication and must consult a specialist immediately if the symptoms linger for over a week," he said.