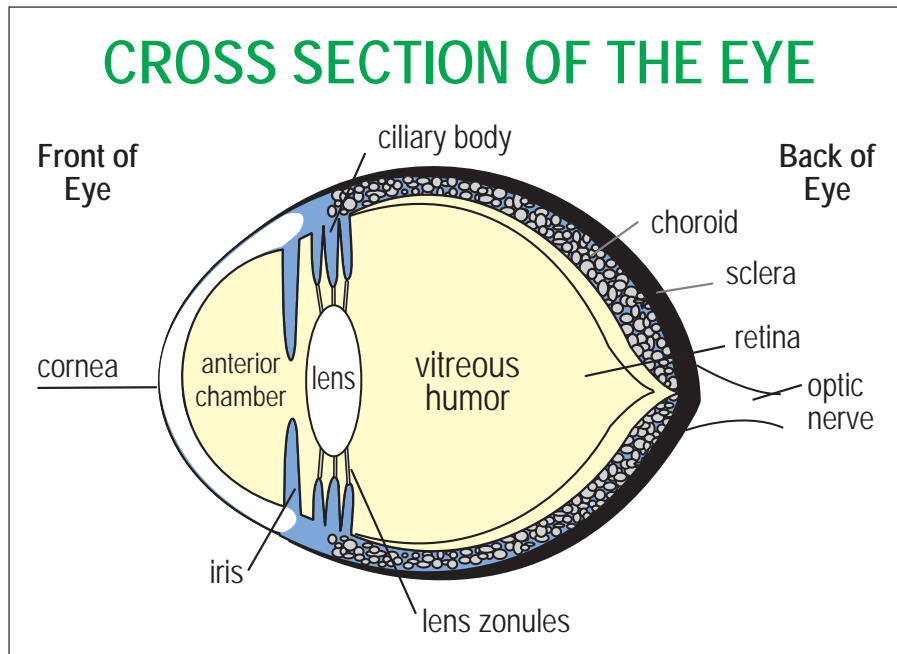


Inflammation in the Eye (Uveitis)

CROSS SECTION OF THE EYE



What is Uveitis?

Uveitis is inflammation of the uveal tract in the eye. The uveal tract or *uvea* is made up of the iris, the ciliary body, and the choroid. Inflammation of any of these parts of the uveal tract is therefore called uveitis.

Why is Uveitis bad in the eye?

In most other parts of the body, inflammation can be useful, as it allows the body to fight infections. In the eye however, inflammation is rarely useful, and the eye has elaborate mechanisms to avoid inflammation.

Sometimes however in spite of these mechanisms, inflammation still occurs. The sequelae to uncontrolled inflammation in the eye can be disastrous, so early intervention is essential.

What causes Uveitis?

Often a specific cause of uveitis can not be found. In humans with uveitis, a cause may not be found, even after tests. This doesn't mean we can't treat uveitis, it's just that we have to treat the symptoms rather than the cause. Some causes of uveitis may include: systemic diseases such as viral infections, cancer, trauma and cataracts.

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Each species has its own specific cause of uveitis. For example, for cats we may ask that a general blood test, as well as tests for feline AIDS (FIV), toxoplasmosis, feline leukaemia virus (FeLV), and feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) be performed. In dogs, we may ask for general blood tests and biochemical tests to be performed, but there may be others.

What treatments are there for Uveitis?

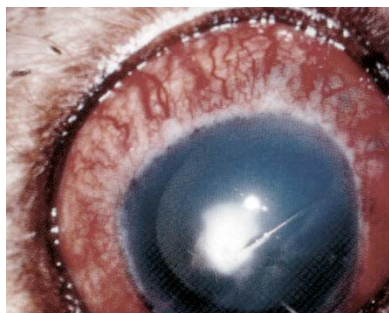
Treatments for uveitis are initially directed specifically against the cause of the inflammation wherever possible. In many cases however we may not be able to identify a cause.

We will then try to minimise any of the secondary complications that uncontrolled inflammation may cause in the eye. This will usually include eye drops (*such as corticosteroid anti-inflammatory drops, and sometimes atropine*) and possibly tablets (*corticosteroids and sometimes antibiotics*).

Unfortunately in some cases, despite aggressive medication, we are unable to control inflammation in the eye.

What are the complications of Uveitis?

In some cases despite our best efforts, we are unable to control uveitis. In these cases, permanent scarring inside the eye, retinal detachments or glaucoma may occur. Vision may be lost.



An eye with Glaucoma

In the worst case scenario, we may need to remove the eye, or place an intrascleral prosthesis. In cases where uveitis has been present for some time, the eye may even degenerate (*phthisis bulbi*). It is therefore essential that you use the medications exactly as directed by your eye specialist.