

UVEITIS

What is uveitis?

Uveitis is inflammation of the tissues inside of the eye, specifically within iris, ciliary body and choroid. The iris regulates the amount of light entering the eye through the pupil, the ciliary body produces the clear fluid in the front part of the eye (aqueous humour) and the choroid contains blood vessels behind the retina.

What are the symptoms of uveitis?

The symptoms can vary depending on which aspects of the eye are affected. Generally, the 'white' of the eye will appear pink or red with prominent blood vessels and the pupil may appear small. There is often pain with increased blinking, excess tear production, and the front of the eye can appear hazy or blue in appearance. An acute loss of vision can occur if the back of the eye is affected.

What causes uveitis?

There are many potential causes of uveitis, and in some cases the origin of the disease cannot be established. The most common cause of uveitis is from trauma to the eye, and this may be accompanied with corneal ulceration.

Anything that triggers the body's immune system can cause uveitis. This includes infections (e.g. bacteria and viruses), cancerous processes, or autoimmune disease where the immune system itself is over-reacting. Cataract development can also result in uveitis, especially in diabetic patients (See Cataracts factsheet).

What are the treatment options for uveitis?

A full ophthalmic examination is required to determine if uveitis is present and why this may have occurred. Treatment for uveitis will be aimed at the underlying cause and is likely to include the administration of anti-inflammatory medication. In some cases further diagnostic tests may be required and the treatment will be tailored to the individual.

What is the prognosis for uveitis?

The prognosis will depend on the severity of the disease and how quickly it is treated. If the underlying cause is known and can be treated, there is a better chance of a favourable outcome. Unfortunately some types of uveitis are more difficult to diagnose and treat, and can require intensive medical management, hospitalisation or surgery. Some breeds are particularly prone to chronic uveitis and may require long-term medical control.

In severe cases, uveitis can lead to other complications such as retinal degeneration and detachment (see factsheet), glaucoma (see Glaucoma factsheet) and permanent loss of vision.

