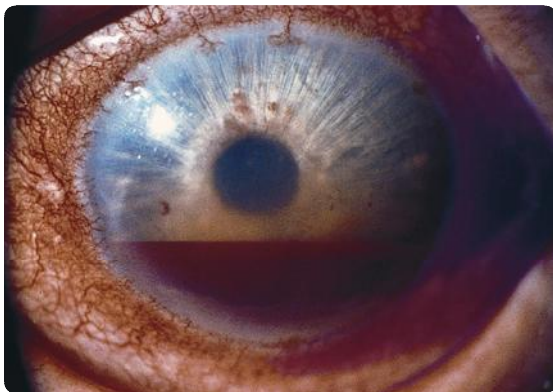




# Hyphema

## What Is Hyphema?

A hyphema is when blood collects inside the front of the eye. This happens between the cornea (the clear covering of the eye) and the iris (the colored part of the eye). The blood may cover part or all of the iris and the pupil (the round, dark circle in the middle of your eye). If you have a hyphema, your vision might be partly or totally blocked in that eye.



A hyphema is when blood collects in the front part of the eye.

A hyphema usually happens when an injury causes a tear to the iris or pupil of the eye. Sometimes people mistake a broken blood vessel in the front of the eye for a hyphema. A broken blood vessel in the eye is a common, harmless condition called subconjunctival hemorrhage. A subconjunctival hemorrhage does not hurt. A hyphema, though, is usually painful. A hyphema must be treated properly or it can cause permanent vision problems.



A subconjunctival hemorrhage is when blood appears in the white of the eye from a broken blood vessel.

## Eye Words to Know

**Cornea:** Clear, dome-shaped window of the front of your eye. It focuses light into your eye.

**Iris:** The colored part of your eye. It controls the size of your pupil to let light into your eye.

**Pupil:** The opening at the center of the iris that allows light to enter the eye.

## Hyphema Signs and Symptoms

Hyphema symptoms include:

- bleeding in the front of the eye
- being sensitive to light
- pain in the eye
- blurry, clouded or blocked vision

## What Causes Hyphema?

Hyphema is usually caused by injuries to the eye from accidents or playing sports. Hyphema can be caused by other, less common things, including:

- abnormal blood vessels growing on the surface of the iris
- eye infections caused by a herpes virus
- blood clotting problems
- problems with artificial lenses placed in the eye after cataract surgery
- very rarely, cancers of the eye



Always wear the right eye protection when playing sports.

Because most hyphemas happen because of sports injuries, it is important to wear sports glasses or goggles. Sports injuries, especially with small balls like racquetballs, can cause serious eye problems. Besides hyphema, these injuries can cause cataracts, retinal detachments and glaucoma and lead to blindness. If you hurt your eye, see an ophthalmologist right away.

## Hyphema Diagnosis

An ophthalmologist will examine your eye completely to diagnose a hyphema. He or she will check:

- how well you can see
- the pressure in your eye
- the inside of your eye

In some cases, the ophthalmologist may order a CT scan. This scan checks the condition of the bones that form your eye sockets and other parts of your face.



An ophthalmologist examines the inside of your eye with a slit-lamp microscope.

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## Hyphema Treatment

Based on what the ophthalmologist finds, he or she may ask you to:

- wear a special shield over your eye to protect it
- cut back on physical activity, or rest in bed
- raise the head of your bed to help your eye drain
- see your ophthalmologist often so he or she can check your healing and eye pressure

Your ophthalmologist may tell you not to use aspirin because it can lead to more bleeding. In some cases, your ophthalmologist might tell you go to the hospital so that your eye can be cared for and checked often. If the hyphema makes your eye pressure rise too high, it can lead to glaucoma or damage your cornea. If this happens, you may need surgery to remove the excess blood, or eye drops for treatment.

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## Summary

A hyphema is when blood collects inside the front of the eye. Hyphema is usually caused by an injury to the eye. Sometimes, though, it can be caused by other problems. Hyphema signs and symptoms include bleeding in the front of the eye, eye pain, sensitivity to light, and blurry, clouded or blocked vision. It is important to wear sports glasses or goggles when playing sports to prevent eye injury. If you hurt your eye, or see blood on your iris without an injury, see an ophthalmologist right away. Treatment may include home or eye drops, and sometimes hospitalization, which is rare.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

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