

## **SUBCONJUNCTIVAL HEMORRHAGE**

A subconjunctival hemorrhage is similar to an ordinary bruise on the skin. It usually appears as a single, concentrated spot of red, or as many diffuse red splotches, on the white of the eye. The red represents blood under the conjunctiva, the clear membrane that covers the white of the eye (called the sclera). The conjunctiva contains numerous blood vessels and capillaries, the tiniest blood vessels in the body. These vessels can break, causing blood to leak between the conjunctiva and the sclera. This minor bleeding under the conjunctiva is what causes the bright red spot to appear on the white of the eye. Seeing a subconjunctival hemorrhage on your eye can be alarming. Yet it is actually a common occurrence, and it is almost always harmless and will leave on its own. It does not affect vision or cause pain. There are usually no sensations or symptoms, other than the appearance of the red spot. In fact, a person may not even be aware that he or she has a subconjunctival hemorrhage until someone points it out, or the person looks in the mirror.

### **WHAT CAUSES SUBCONJUNCTIVAL HEMORRHAGE?**

The most common causes are coughing, sneezing, straining, or any similar action that temporarily raises blood pressure in the veins, leading to a small rupture in a capillary. Subconjunctival hemorrhage can also occur because of trauma to the eye, even minor trauma such as rubbing the eye vigorously. Other less frequent causes of subconjunctival hemorrhage include diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, and excessive amounts of certain medications such as aspirin or blood thinners (like coumadin), which affect the body's bleeding mechanisms. Very rare causes may include blood clotting disorders or other systemic blood disorders.

### **HOW IS SUBCONJUNCTIVAL HEMORRHAGE TREATED?**

Treatment is not necessary. Over time, the blood spot will slowly disappear, clearing up on its own. This may take days or weeks, depending on the size of the blood spot. If your eye is irritated, over-the-counter artificial tears should be used. Although a subconjunctival hemorrhage can seem alarming, it is almost always a harmless condition.