

The Quick Summary

You have an activation of a herpes virus in your eye. We will treat this episode, but it might activate again in the future.

Herpes Simplex Virus and Herpes Zoster Virus

You have an activation of a virus in your eye that is causing your symptoms. Viruses that cause appearances like this are herpes simplex virus and herpes zoster virus. Herpes simplex virus is the virus that causes cold sores on lips. Herpes zoster virus is the chickenpox virus. A very high percentage of people carry both viruses, but most patients don't have activation of the virus ever in their lives. Why is it active in your eye? We don't have a good answer; it is just the "luck of the draw" as far as we know.

We will do our best to treat this episode, which may involve a combination of antiviral treatments and other medications.

One thing to keep in mind is that this virus has been with you for a long time and will continue to be with you for a long time. It can reactivate in the future, in which case we may need to treat it again. We should follow you regularly to check on your eyes, but we also might need to see you if you notice problems with your eyes on an urgent/emergent basis.

If you have multiple recurrences or severe recurrences, Dr. Shalwala may recommend that you take medication on a regular basis to prevent recurrences. This medication is an oral antiviral pill, and it is usually well tolerated. It is sometimes a nuisance to take another pill every day, but it can prevent reactivations, and we will only recommend it to patients who we judge to have risk of permanent scarring damage. Permanent scarring damage can interfere with vision, and it is definitely much easier to deal with that scarring by preventing it because there isn't much good treatment once the scarring occurs.



One last thing to remember is that most everyone has been exposed to cold sore virus and chickenpox virus. That means you are not contagious, except for people who have not been exposed. Exposure usually happens in the first couple of years of life, so the only people to be careful around are pregnant women and babies.

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