

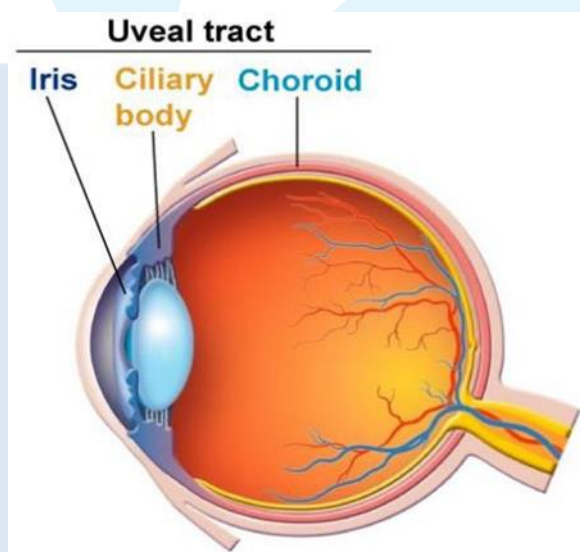
# Screening for Uveitis in Children

## What is uveitis?

Uveitis is inflammation of a layer of the eye, called the uveal tract.

The uveal tract is made up of the iris (visible coloured part of the eye), ciliary body (muscle behind the iris) and choroid (layer of blood vessels inside the eye) as shown in the picture.

Uveitis can occur in one, several or all parts of the uveal tract.



## What causes uveitis?

Uveitis can be caused by:

- Autoimmune conditions – when parts of the body become inflamed in autoimmune conditions (over activity of the immune system) this can cause inflammation in the eyes too. One of the more common autoimmune conditions associated with uveitis in children is Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA). If your child has confirmed or suspected JIA they will be referred to a uveitis service for eye examinations.
- Idiopathic – sometimes uveitis can occur with no known cause and this is known as idiopathic uveitis.
- Infection – this could be viral, bacterial or parasitic.
- Injury.

Your child may require screening for uveitis if they are being investigated for the sorts of conditions listed above or if they have had uveitis previously. It is important to note that if your child has been referred to a hospital uveitis screening service, then an appointment with a Community Optometrist (Optician) is not sufficient for the uveitis screening check.

## Why is screening for uveitis needed in the above situations?

Often in children there are no symptoms of uveitis and, if left undetected and untreated, uveitis can lead to complications including:

- Cataracts (clouding of the lens inside the eye).
- Glaucoma (damage to the optic nerve often caused by raised pressure in the eye).
- Cystoid macular oedema (swelling at the back of the eye).
- Amblyopia (impaired visual development).

Fortunately, uveitis is a treatable condition and if treatment is necessary this is administered and monitored by the hospital paediatric uveitis service.

## What will screening for uveitis at Manchester Royal Eye Hospital involve for my child?

Your child's first uveitis screening appointment usually occurs within 6 weeks of referral to the service.

You should bring your child to outpatient clinic H on the ground floor of Manchester Royal Eye Hospital for their appointment.

In clinic H, your child will have their vision tested in an age-appropriate way. This could be using letters, pictures or other tests designed for different ages and abilities. It will be done by a member of the clinic H team who are experienced at measuring vision in children.

Your child will also be examined in the clinic by either a Specialist Orthoptist (eye care professional who has received additional training to screen for uveitis) or Ophthalmologist (eye doctor).

The clinics are all led by Consultant Ophthalmologists who specialise in paediatric (childhood) uveitis. The examination will usually be done using a slit-lamp, as shown in the picture.



It involves a light being shone at the eyes and is generally comfortable for children. Your child may need eye drops during the appointment to dilate their pupils and ensure a full and accurate examination. If this is the case, you may want to bring sunglasses to make your child more comfortable after the appointment.

## What will happen after the appointment?

At the end of your first appointment your clinician will advise you whether there is any uveitis present. If there is, your child will need treatment for this which usually involves eye drops at this point. If there is no uveitis, your clinician will advise you if and when we need to see your child again. In some cases, only a one-off screen is required but for most children, several screening examinations a year will be necessary to continue to check for uveitis and allow prompt detection and early treatment if it is identified.

## What are the symptoms of uveitis?

There are **usually no symptoms** of uveitis in young children which is why it is so important to attend all of the screening appointments. Sometimes, older children with uveitis can be sensitive to light, notice blurred vision or see floaters in front of their eyes.

Signs of uveitis that parents and guardians can look out for include:

- Red eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- Abnormal-looking pupils
- Clouding of the front surface of the eye (the cornea)
- Unusual blinking
- Excessive eye rubbing
- A squint (one eye does not look straight)
- Disinterest in tasks requiring visual attention

## What should I do if I notice signs of uveitis between appointments?

If your child complains of symptoms or if you notice signs of uveitis between appointments, you should contact Manchester Royal Eye Hospital the same day. You can leave a message for your child's consultant with the paediatric secretarial team by telephoning (0161) 276 5628 Monday – Friday, 9.00am - 4.00pm or e-mailing [uveitis.paeds@mft.nhs.uk](mailto:uveitis.paeds@mft.nhs.uk).

Out of hours or at weekends you can visit the Paediatric Emergency Department at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.

## What happens when my child is discharged from the hospital uveitis screening service?

When the risk of your child getting uveitis is low enough (often around the age of 12 years but this can vary), they will be discharged from the hospital screening service to an Optometrist (Optician) in the community for annual reviews. It is still very important to attend these reviews because the risk is never completely gone.

If you notice any signs or symptoms of uveitis after discharge from the hospital service, you should still seek an urgent ophthalmological opinion.

### For further information:

- Speak to the clinician who sees your child at your next appointment.
- <http://oliviasvision.org> is a website that includes information about childhood uveitis.