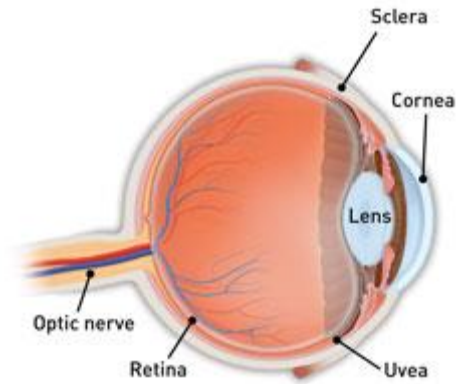


# What Is Scleritis?

Scleritis is a painful inflammation (swelling) of the white part of the eye, which is also known as the sclera. The tough, fibrous tissues of the sclera form a protective outer layer for the eye and make up 83 percent of the eye's surface.

In almost half of all cases, scleritis is associated with an underlying autoimmune disorder such as rheumatoid arthritis.

There are two main types of scleritis: anterior and posterior.



**Anterior scleritis**, the most common type, affects the front portion of the sclera. There are three types of anterior scleritis:

- **Diffuse scleritis** is the most common type and fortunately the most treatable. This type displays widespread redness and inflammation throughout the whole or a portion of the front portion of the sclera.
- **Nodular scleritis**, is characterized by the presence of nodules or bumps, often tender to the touch, on the surface of the eye.
- **Necrotizing scleritis** is the most severe form of anterior scleritis. It has the ability to destroy scleral tissues and in rare cases may lead to loss of the eye(s). This form is typically characterized by extreme pain and tenderness (although a rare form can occur without pain).

**Posterior scleritis**, the rarer form, affects the back portion of the eye and often is not related to an underlying systemic disorder. Posterior scleritis can develop on its own or with the anterior form of scleritis. People with this form of scleritis may have pain and tenderness. This form can cause complications resulting in [retinal detachment](#) and [angle-closure glaucoma](#).

## Scleritis Causes

Scleritis is typically associated with an autoimmune disorder. In other cases the cause is unknown.

Scleritis may be associated with:

- Different forms of inflammatory arthritis;
- Lupus;
- Certain connective tissue disease;
- Inflammatory bowel disease;
- Sjogren's syndrome;
- Wegener's granulomatosis;
- Scleroderma.

Scleritis may also result from [trauma to the eye](#), or, rarely, may be caused by a fungus or a parasite.

# Scleritis Symptoms

Scleritis symptoms can include severe pain and tenderness of the eye.

This pain can also extend to regions of the jaw, face, or head of the affected side. Inflammation (swelling) and redness of the white portion of the eye is also common. Blurred vision, tearing, and extreme sensitivity to light may occur. In some cases, partial or complete loss of vision is possible.

## Scleritis Diagnosis

It's important to schedule a [complete eye examination](#) with an [ophthalmologist \(Eye M.D.\)](#) the moment you experience any [scleritis symptoms](#). Scleritis left untreated can lead to vision loss.

During your examination, your ophthalmologist will inspect the inside and outside of your eye using a slit lamp, which focuses an intense beam of light into the eye while he or she looks through a microscope.

As scleritis can be associated with other disorders, your Eye M.D. will want to discuss your overall health and may work with your primary care physician or other specialists to identify any underlying causes. Blood tests, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or other testing may be needed.

## Scleritis Treatment

Scleritis is a serious condition that can lead to loss of vision. Therefore, scleritis needs to be treated as soon as [scleritis symptoms](#) become evident.

Treatment varies depending on the type of scleritis. In most cases, corticosteroid pills and nonsteroid anti-inflammatory drugs can be used to reduce pain and inflammation. Eye solutions or antibiotics may be prescribed as well.

In more severe cases, surgery may be necessary to repair scleral tissues and prevent further loss of vision.

In cases where scleritis is caused by another disorder within the body, treatment of that disease is also necessary to control [scleritis symptoms](#). Keep in mind that despite treatment, scleritis may recur. It's important to see your Eye M.D. and other specialists regularly to properly treat scleritis.