

Don't ignore your eye health during the COVID time



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The COVID 19 pandemic is here to stay for a while. As the number of cases (of COVID 19) increase in the population, it is of utmost importance to maintain social distance and not travel unnecessarily. By staying at home, we can manage a lot of work like working online, studying for school, ordering groceries and supplies, etc. But what about our health? Especially the health of our eyes? What if we have decreased vision or redness or pain? How will we know whether it is an emergency or it can wait? Should we postpone the visit to the eye doctor?

As a patient, you would be naturally apprehensive about your eyes as vision is one of the most essential sense that is required to function. It is also well known that certain diseases, if not taken care of in the initial stages, can lead to permanent visual loss. In these times, teleconsultation/telephone and video consultation are proving to be very useful to have an initial assessment of the condition of the patient and decide on whether the patient needs a hospital visit or not.

The conditions for which one can seek a teleconsultation and avoid a physical visit include:

- Complaints of dryness, eye fatigue, discomfort: this is often due to the necessary use of computers as many people are now working online and prolonged use of digital media either for work or entertainment can cause this
- Complaints of redness, eye swelling, mild to moderate pain, watering, itching, lid nodules: many of these conditions can be managed medically and a good teleconsultation including a video consultation would be the first step

When should you visit the hospital and on an emergency basis? **DO NOT WAIT IF YOU HAVE:**

- Sudden loss of vision
- Complaints of severe pain, associated with redness, light sensitivity: in such a case the patient should prepare for a hospital visit as these symptoms could be due to a more severe eye disease
- Any significant injury such as household chemicals falling accidentally into the eye, injury to the eye with a blunt or sharp object while working/playing etc.

When should you visit the hospital, not as an emergency but where routine follow-ups cannot be ignored:

- Diabetic patient with or without deterioration of vision
- Patients with a history of glaucoma or other eye diseases such as corneal transplants
- Other chronic conditions for which the patient is on medications as advised by the ophthalmologist (uveitis, etc.)

How safe is it to visit the hospital during the pandemic:

Followings steps are being taken to ensure the utmost safety for patients:

- A triage system at the entry point itself, where patients who have symptoms suggestive of COVID infection are being seen in an isolation room
- The patient numbers are maintained at a uniform inflow and outflow so as to ensure that there is no overcrowding in lounges or clinics
- A social distance of one meter is maintained between patients even while being seated
- The hospital personnel use personal protection equipment to ensure the patients are not exposed to them and vice versa
- Equipment used for examining the patients are sterilized after each examination
- Follow-up through teleconsultation is being encouraged to minimize the number of visits that patients have to make to the hospital