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Giant Papillary Conjunctivitis (GPC)

Giant papillary conjunctivitis (GPC) is an inflammation of the inner surface of the eyelids, most frequently associated with contact lens wear. It can develop in people who wear either soft or rigid gas permeable contact lenses and can occur at any time, even if an individual has successfully worn contacts for a number of years. Although not vision threatening, GPC can be inconvenient and may require one to stop wearing contacts temporarily or even permanently.

The typical symptoms of GPC include red, irritated eyes, often with itching and mucus discharge. Blurred vision and light sensitivity can also occur. GPC is not an infection, but a hypersensitivity of the membrane covering the inner lids and the whites of the eyes. The inner lining of the eyelid becomes roughened and inflamed by constant blinking over a contact lens or other foreign body such as an artificial eye. Hard, flat elevations in a cobblestone pattern develop on the undersurface of the upper eyelid. Eventually the entire eye becomes irritated.

In most cases, treatment of GPC involves discontinuing the use of contact lenses to allow the eye to rest. Eyedrops are frequently prescribed to control inflammation. Many people find their symptoms are relieved when contact lens wear is discontinued. Unfortunately, the symptoms can return when lens wear is resumed.

Once GPC is under control, it may be helpful to consider changing to new contacts or disposable contacts. Changing lens care systems and cleansing solutions can also be helpful. After an episode of GPC, limit the amount of time lenses are worn, and increase the time slowly.

Once it develops, GPC may be an ongoing problem. Prolonged GPC may be more difficult to treat.