

Bilateral black eyes, “raccoon’s eyes” resulting from plucking of eyebrows

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A black eye, “raccoon’s eyes” is caused when blood collects in the space round the eye. It is a common result of injury to the face or head, but may also arise without any kind of injury. It may signify more serious injuries or illnesses.

Pain and swelling round the eyes are the most common signs and symptoms of patients with raccoon’s eyes. Serious visual problems are less common. In this paper we present a case of raccoon’s eyes which resulted directly from plucking of eyebrows.

A 38-year-old female patient reported to the ORL outpatient clinic with bilateral bruises and red-purple discolouration round the eyes (figure 1) which had developed within a few hours of eyebrow plucking for cosmetic purposes. Neither pain nor swelling round the eyes nor visual disturbances were present. The patient had no known acute or chronic diseases. This was not the first time she had plucked her eyebrows, nor had she known allergies. Neurological and medical tests, blood biochemistry, CT and MRI of the head and neck were normal. The raccoon’s eyes disappeared gradually within 15 days. She was followed up for one year but no medical pathology was observed. We assume that this case of raccoon’s eyes developed through the tiny traumas to the eyebrows during plucking.

Raccoon’s eyes is a common complication of basal skull fractures resulting from blood tracking along tissue planes into periorbital tissues. Severe maxillofacial trauma, thoracic crush injury and acute subdural bleeding are also known to cause raccoon’s eyes [1].

Migraine and trigeminal autonomic cephalalgia may likewise cause raccoon’s eyes [2]. This cephalalgia is associated with



Figure 1

Patient with raccoon’s eyes. This picture was taken 1 day after plucking of eyebrows. The patient has given her consent for the publication of this article and the picture.

headache, palpebral oedema, periorbital ecchymosis, lacrimation, nasal congestion, rhinorrhoea, severe labile hypertension and behavioural disturbances.

In cardiac amyloidosis, fatigue, weakness and macroglossia may be present in addition to raccoon’s eyes [3]. Patients with Kaposi’s sarcoma may also present with raccoon’s eyes [4]. In a reported case the patient complained of facial and periorbital oedema with raccoon’s eyes. Raccoon’s eyes may be an initial sign in multiple myeloma [5].

Raccoon’s eyes are usually an initial or concomitant symptom in a few diseases in addition to head, neck and thoracic trauma, but, as in this case, the cause cannot always be exactly clarified.

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