

Drug-resistant bacteria prompts eye drop recall

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A rare strain of a drug-resistant bacteria found in some recalled eye drops has been linked to dozens of infections across the United States.

RUSH ophthalmologist Jonathan Rubenstein, MD, says the impact of these infections is serious, but the risk to the general public and breadth of these incidents are limited.

What is this bacteria?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [has reported](#) 68 infections across the United States, including in Illinois. Three people have died, and eight others have lost their vision. Four people had an eyeball surgically removed because of the [infection](#).

The [drug-resistant bacteria](#) found in the drops—Pseudomonas aeruginosa—can infect both immunocompromised and immunocompetent people. It's commonly found in soil and water. According to the CDC, the most at-risk patients are those who are on a ventilator, using a catheter or healing from surgery or burn wounds.

The [bacteria](#) can be spread to people in health care settings through contaminated hands, equipment or surfaces. While very serious, the infections are extremely rare, Rubenstein said.

"The company that produced the contaminated eye drops is a very small company that has very little penetration in the United States, and patients have very little access to these eye drops," Rubenstein said. "I don't think there should be a cause for panic among patients."

The recalled eye drops were manufactured in India by Global Pharma Healthcare and distributed by EzriCare and Delsam Pharma. In February, the company issued a voluntary recall for its artificial tears eyedrops.

Symptoms for the beginning of an infection may be increased redness in the eyes, discomfort or pain, thick white or yellow discharge from the

eyes, and decreased [visual acuity](#).

Don't be afraid of eye drops

Artificial tears are a type of eye drop that patients take to address dry eye. The risk associated with this specific recall applies only to the drops manufactured under EzriCare and Delsam Pharma. The risk currently is not associated with any other distributors or brands of artificial tears. Rubenstein said artificial tears are one of the most common and effective medications used among patients suffering from dry eye.

"In general, patients can feel very safe about eyedrops," he said. "This is a very unusual occurrence, so there shouldn't be a panic about using [eye drops](#)."

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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