

Corneal abrasion

a scratch or graze to the eye

This information has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about a corneal abrasion. If you do have any questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a corneal abrasion?

The cornea is the clear, dome-shaped structure at the front of the eye. A corneal abrasion is a small scratch or graze to the cornea.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- History of eye trauma
- Red, painful eye
- Watering
- Blurred vision

A foreign body sensation (a feeling that something is in your eye).

How is it diagnosed?

In most cases the diagnosis is confirmed by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor). The ophthalmologist examines the cornea with a microscope. A drop of anaesthetic is given to make the examination more comfortable. A small amount of dye will also be put onto your eye so that the abrasion can be seen more clearly.

What treatments are available?

The following treatments may be recommended:

- **antibiotic ointment** and an **eye pad** to keep the eye closed – this allows the cornea to heal without being interrupted by blinking. The cornea usually heals in two to three days but follow your doctor's instructions about how long to use the ointment for;
- **lubricants** at night – to prevent the eyelid from sticking to the cornea while sleeping and tearing the healing eye skin. These lubricants may need to be continued for several weeks.
- **cyclopentolate** – this is a drop that dilates (enlarges) the pupil and helps to relieve pain. Vision is blurred for at least 12 hours after the drop has been used.

Advice on use of any treatments recommended will be given to you by your nurse or doctor.

What happens if I do not get treatment?

The eye can be very painful, but in most cases the cornea heals and all symptoms pass. In some cases, inflammation and infection can occur if left untreated and may cause permanent damage.

Can there be any permanent damage?

Provided the abrasion is superficial and there is no secondary infection, most corneal abrasions heal quickly and vision returns completely.

In a small number of cases although the skin over the cornea heals it does not bind down entirely and can stick to the eyelid at night and rip when waking and opening the eyes or when the eyes move rapidly while dreaming. This is called recurrent corneal erosion syndrome and may require the prolonged use of lubricant eye ointments and occasionally laser surgery. If such symptoms occur please seek medical advice.

Is there anything I can do to help?

- Do not drive if you have been given eye drops that could blur your vision, or if you are given an eye pad.
- If given an eye pad please take care when walking down stairs.

Where can I get more information?

If your symptoms get worse, please go to or contact the eye casualty immediately. If the symptoms do not go away with treatment **after 48 hours**, please contact the nurse practitioner in eye casualty on **020 7188 4336** between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Contact us

The eye casualty department is open Monday to Friday. 8.30am to 4.30pm. You can contact the eye department by telephoning 020 7188 0077.

Outside these hours, please contact the eye doctor on call via the main switchboard on 020 7188 7188.

Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

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