

## Overview

- You have been seen in the Emergency Department and found to have a corneal abrasion. This leaflet provides further advice on this condition.
- Corneal abrasions can be painful and if the pain is not settling or is severe please contact your GP or come back for further review.
- Please take over the counter pain-killers should you need them in addition to other treatments your doctor may give you to help your pain.
- Please complete the course of your treatment as prescribed by your doctor.

### When to seek further help

- Seek immediate medical attention from your local eye casualty department if you have vision loss or severe eye pain.

## General support

- For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.
- The **NHS** website provides online health information and guidance [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- **NHS 111** phone line offers medical help and advice from trained advisers supported by nurses and paramedics. Available 24 hours a day. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
- There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, in Crawley and at Lewes Victoria Hospital. [www.bsuh.nhs.uk/services/ae/](http://www.bsuh.nhs.uk/services/ae/)
- **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** can be contacted with your comments and concerns, and to provide general support. [PALS@bsuh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@bsuh.nhs.uk)  
RSCH: 01273 664683.  
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Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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**NHS**

**Brighton and Sussex  
University Hospitals**  
NHS Trust

# Corneal abrasion

## Advice for patients seen in the Emergency Department

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[www.bsuh.nhs.uk](http://www.bsuh.nhs.uk)

## Corneal abrasion

### 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?

- The diagnosis is usually confirmed by a doctor who examines the cornea with a retinoscope or slit lamp. A drop of anaesthetic may be given to make the examination more comfortable although this is not always the case. A small amount of dye will also be put onto your eye so that the abrasion can be seen more clearly. This will make your eye look a little yellow and may leave a yellowish discoloration to your skin for a short period which will disappear by itself with time.

## Treatment

- The following treatments may be recommended:
  - An antibiotic ointment or drops: this prevents the chance of infection while the tear to the outer lining of the eye heals. 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. It may be used to help with pain relief.
  - Local anaesthetic drops – we will usually not prescribe these although you may get some initially when we examine your eye. There is a risk of developing further damage to cornea if we treat you with these.
- In addition to the above treatments we may encourage you to use a pad over the eye. This will help with your pain relief and also prevent the potential of further damage to the cornea if we have given you local anaesthetic drops when examining your eye.

- 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.

## Outlook

### 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. It 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 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.