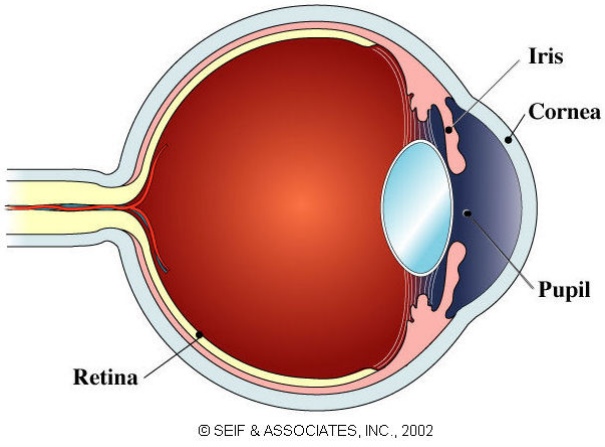
Corneal Abrasion

The cornea is the clear covering at the front and center of the eye. When looking at the colored portion (*iris*) of the eye, you are looking through that person's cornea.



This very thin tissue is made up of many layers. The surface layer is a single layer of cells called the *corneal epithelium*. This is one of the most sensitive tissues in the body. If a scratch or injury causes the corneal epithelium to come off, it is called a *corneal abrasion*. If the injury extends to the tissues below the epithelium, the condition is called a *corneal ulcer*.

CAUSES

- Scratches.
- Trauma.
- Foreign body in the eye.
- Some people have recurrences of abrasions in the area of the original injury even after they heal. This is called *recurrent erosion syndrome*. Recurrent erosion syndromes generally improve and go away with time.

SYMPTOMS

- Eye pain.
- Difficulty or inability to keep the injured eye open.
- The eye becomes very sensitive to light.
- Recurrent erosions tend to happen suddenly, first thing in the morning – usually upon awakening and opening the eyes.

DIAGNOSIS

Your eye professional can diagnose a corneal abrasion during an eye exam. Dye is usually placed in the eye using a drop or a small paper strip moistened by the patient's tears. When the eye is examined with a special light, the abrasion shows up clearly because of the dye.

TREATMENT

- Small abrasions may be treated with antibiotic drops or ointment alone.
- Usually a pressure patch is specially applied. Pressure patches prevent the eye from blinking, allowing the corneal epithelium to heal. Because blinking is less, a pressure patch also reduces the amount of pain present in the eye during healing. Most corneal abrasions heal within 2-3 days with no effect on vision.
  WARNING: Do not drive or operate machinery while your eye is patched. Your ability to judge distances is impaired.
- If abrasion becomes infected and spreads to the deeper tissues of the cornea, a corneal ulcer can result. This is serious because it can cause corneal scarring. Corneal scars interfere with light passing through the cornea, and cause a loss of vision in the involved eye.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important to keep that appointment. Not keeping the appointment could result in a severe eye infection or permanent loss of vision. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, you must call back to this facility for assistance.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have pain, light sensitivity and a scratchy feeling in one eye (or both).
- Your pressure patch keeps loosening up and you can blink your eye under the patch after treatment.
- Any kind of discharge develops from the involved eye after treatment or if the lids stick together in the

morning.

- You have the same symptoms in the morning as you did with the original abrasion days, weeks or months after the abrasion healed.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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