

Information for Patients

Corneal Abrasion

What is a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion is a painful scratch on the surface of your eye (the clear part of your eye called the cornea). The cornea has many nerve endings just under the surface, so that any disruption to the surface is often very painful. Corneal abrasions are often caused by something hitting or poking the eye; e.g. fingernails, hairbrush, twigs, mascara brush. You could also cause an abrasion by wearing contact lenses for longer than the recommended time or by rubbing your eyes excessively. Exposure of the unprotected eye to ultraviolet light from sun lamps or welding arcs can also cause changes to the corneal surface resembling a corneal abrasion.

Is it painful?

It is painful and often feels like there is something under the upper eyelid. You might also have a watering, red eye and blurred vision.

What is the treatment?

On arrival at the Emergency Eye Department, you might have an anaesthetic eye drop put in your eye to give you some pain relief. Patients often ask if they can have some to take home. Unfortunately we cannot give you these drops to take home as they stop the eye from healing well if used repeatedly.

Treatment will depend on how large the scratch is. If it is small and not deep, one dose of antibiotic ointment will be put in your eye. For larger abrasions we might put a dilating drop in to relax the eye and ease some of the pain, this will make your pupil (the black part of your eye) larger and you might not be able to focus on close work for up to 24 hours until the effect wears off.

You could also be given antibiotic ointment or eye drops to use for one week. Research has shown that a corneal abrasion heals just as well without an eye pad, however, if you feel an eye pad would help to make your eye more comfortable, nursing staff will put a pad on for you. Pain relieving medication and rest might be advised to help with the pain.

How to manage your eye pain at home

Instructions:

- If your eye pain is mild, we recommend that you take Paracetamol 1 gram (2 tablets) regularly every 4 to 6 hours. Do not take more than eight tablets in 24 hours. Do not take with any other pain relieving medication that you might be on.
- If your eye pain is moderate or severe, take Paracetamol 1 gram (2 tablets) every 6 hours together with Ibuprofen 400mgs every 8 hours. Ibuprofen should be taken with a meal or after a meal or snack. Do not take more than six Ibuprofen tablets in 24 hours.

Caution: Ibuprofen should not be taken if you suffer from the following:

- Impaired kidney function.
- Active stomach ulcer.
- Asthma brought on by aspirin.
- Any known allergy or intolerance of any anti-inflammatory medication.
- Any bleeding disorders.
- Severe liver problems.
- If you are pregnant.
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure.

Please seek the advice of a pharmacist or your GP if you are unsure about taking this medication.

Some tips for managing eye pain:

- Use your eye medication as prescribed.
- Rest your eyes and avoid watching the television, reading and working on the computer.
- Take your pain relieving medication as instructed/advised.
- If possible, try and get some sleep.

- A cold compress over your closed eyelids can help in relieving some of your eye discomfort.
- Avoid bright lights. Wear dark glasses to help minimise bright lights.
- Allow yourself to be taken care of.

Important

If your pain is not relieved by this regime of pain relief medication please speak to your local pharmacist or GP or if the pain lasts for more than 2 days please contact the Emergency Eye Department on (0161) 276 5597 available everyday between 8.00 am - 8.15 pm.

Keeping a record of your pain medication

Here is an example of how you can keep a record of your level of pain and medication taken. Your pain level can be scored between 0 -10 with 0 being no pain and 10 the worst pain ever.

Date and time	Level of Pain	Pain Relief Medication Taken

Do I need a follow-up appointment?

We might ask you to return for a check after 24 - 48 hours so that we can see if your eye is healing. Some corneal abrasions can cause an inflammation inside the eye, if this happens we will ask you to come again to check the inflammation has settled.

In a very small number of people, the corneal abrasion does not heal smoothly and can open up again. This is called recurrent corneal erosion and can happen within weeks, months or even years after the corneal abrasion.

If you get any of these symptoms:

- Sudden pain in the eye that had the injury, often on waking in the morning.

- Watery and sensitivity to light.
- Blurred vision.

Please contact the Emergency Eye Department on (0161) 276 5597 available everyday between 8.00 am - 8.15 pm, or your local eye unit.