

Corneal Abrasion

This is a leaflet designed to give you some information about your eye condition.

What is a corneal abrasion?

This is a scratch on the eye, typically caused by being hit in the eye, a twig hitting the eye, while turning a page of a book, rubbing the eye excessively etc.

The scratch occurs on the Cornea which is the clear window of the eye, like the front camera lens of a camera. It is similar to normal skin and is just like having a graze or cut on the skin. Like the skin it heals rapidly over a few days.

Why is it so painful?

The cornea is richly innervated with nerves, and so any damage to them will be painful. Every time the lid blinks it irritates the nerves.

Other symptoms

Light is often painful as well, the eye often waters and it can feel as though there is something in the eye.

Treatment

There are 3 main options for treatment:

- Apply a firm Double Eye pad, together with antibiotic ointment and a dilating drop. The pad is changed daily until the eye is healed.
- No eye pad, apply Antibiotic ointment and a dilating drop until healed.
- Apply a bandage contact Lens with preservative free antibiotics until healed.

The Doctor will advise which treatment is the most appropriate for your abrasion.

Later complications

- The eye can be sensitive to wind and/or be a little irritable for a few weeks. Simple lubricating gels like Viscotears will help with the discomfort.
- Recurrent Abrasion. This is not common, but more likely to occur with deep cuts. It is like a recurrence of the original abrasion. It happens because during the night with the eye closed, the eye actually loses water and dries out somewhat, on waking in the morning the skin of the cornea can become stuck to the lid and cause a recurrence of the abrasion. Prevention with Lubricating drops at night time reduce the incidence.

Most abrasions heal up within a day or two with no further trouble in the future. However prevention is better than cure, so always remember to wear eye protection when undertaking DIY jobs or when using machine tools. Remember to use them in the garden when cutting trees or roses. Watch out for babies and small children's feet and nails, a common source of abrasions.

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