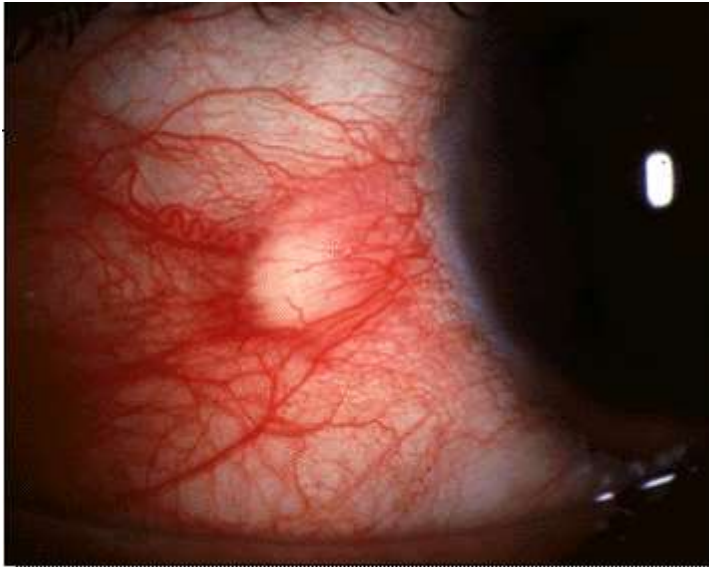


Pingueculae

These are triangular usually raised grey-white nodules on the white part of the eye. They are usually situated quite close to the Limbus of the eye (At the junction of the Colored Iris and the White part of the eye). They are usually quite visible if you look in the mirror.

They usually occur in both eyes and sometimes on both left and right sides of the iris of the same eye, ie you can have two Pinguecula in one eye.



What are they?

Histologically they are Elastoid Degeneration of the Subepithelial Collagen.

Why do they occur?

They are related to age, ie occur more frequently as we get older.

They are commoner in people who work outside a lot, and it is thus believed that ultra violet light is a factor.

It is also believed that people working in dusty or windy environments are more susceptible to them.

Symptoms

Often none.

However may cause a break up of the tear film leading to a pricking sensation as the cornea dries out.

Treatment

Usually lubricating drops such as Celluvisc (Allergan Carmellose 1% Preservative Free), Viscotears, Tears Natural etc.. are all that are required to relieve the discomfort. An alternative to use is the VisuXL Gel which has addition of Q10-CoEnzyme.

Miss Olver also likes to use Alomide (Lodoxamide eye drops) if the pingueculae gets inflamed.

Surgical excision

The removal of pingueculae, which are non-cancerous growths on the conjunctiva (the clear, thin tissue that lies over the white part of the eye), is generally successful when performed by an experienced ophthalmologist. The success of the procedure depends on various factors including the size and location of the pinguecula, the technique used, and the patient's overall eye health.

1. **Surgical Excision:** This is the most common method for removing a pinguecula. It involves the physical removal of the growth. The success rate is typically high, but as with any surgery, there are risks of complications such as infection, scarring, or recurrence of the growth.

2. **Postoperative Care:** Success is also dependent on appropriate postoperative care. This includes the use of anti-inflammatory and antibiotic eye drops to prevent infection and reduce inflammation.

3. **Recurrence:** One of the concerns following pinguecula removal is the risk of recurrence. Factors such as continued exposure to UV light, wind, and dust, which are believed to contribute to the development of pingueculae, can increase the risk of recurrence. Therefore, preventive measures such as wearing sunglasses and using artificial tears can be important.

4. **Patient Satisfaction:** While the physical removal is often successful, patient satisfaction can vary depending on cosmetic outcomes and the resolution of symptoms like irritation or dryness.

5. **Alternative Treatments:** In some cases, alternatives to surgery, such as lubricating eye drops or steroids for inflammation, may be recommended and can be effective in managing symptoms without the need for surgery.

It's important to note that the decision to remove a pinguecula should be based on a thorough evaluation by an ophthalmologist. The procedure is typically considered for cases where the pinguecula causes significant discomfort, interferes with vision, or leads to frequent inflammation. As always, patients should discuss the potential risks and benefits of the procedure with their eye care professional.

Complications of pingueculae

Usually none, but occasionally they may progress to a Pterygium which is where the skin of the eye grows over the pupil and these do need to be removed should this occur.

Prognosis

Most pingueculae grow slowly and almost never cause significant damage, so the prognosis is excellent. Diagnosis should be made by an eye doctor to rule out other more serious disorders.

Prevention

There is nothing that has been clearly shown to prevent these disorders, or to prevent a pinguecula from progressing to a pterygium. However, the presence of pingueculae have been linked to exposure to UV radiation. For that reason, UV exposure should be reduced. The American Optometric Association (AOA) suggests that sunglasses should block 99-100% of UV-A and UV-B rays. Patients should speak to their eye care professionals about protective coatings on sunglasses or regular spectacles. Protecting the eyes from sunlight, dust, and other environmental irritants is a good idea.

Nicholas Lee 2024