

**Patient  
Information**

# Corneal abrasion

## Introduction

This leaflet provides information and advice for patients who have a corneal abrasion.

## What is a corneal abrasion?

The cornea is the clear, protective covering at the front of your eye. A corneal abrasion is a scratch to this structure.

## What can cause a corneal abrasion?

- Foreign bodies, such as sand, dust, wood or metal shavings
- Scratches from objects such as fingernails, tree branches or contact lenses
- Previous injuries to the cornea which have not healed properly can reoccur

Corneal abrasion can also occasionally happen without an obvious cause.

## How do I know if I have a corneal abrasion?

The cornea is sensitive so an abrasion is very painful. Some people feel that their eye is gritty, watery or red. Others find that their vision becomes blurred, or have a headache and find bright lights aggravate their symptoms.

## What if I wear contact lenses?

You have a higher risk of infection if you wear contact lenses. You must remove your lenses until the abrasion has healed and you have finished using the prescribed medication in your eye.

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## Preventing corneal abrasions

- Wear protective eye goggles to avoid flying particles when using power tools such as chainsaws, strimmers or grinders
- Keep babies' fingernails short
- Trim low tree branches
- Handle contact lenses with care

## What to do if you think you have something in your eye

- Wash out the eye with clean water
- Pull the upper lid over the bottom lid
- Avoid rubbing your eye
- Gently wipe away particles from the inner corner of your eye using a wet, soft cloth (this must not have stray strands attached)

If you have a foreign body on the cornea, or something in your eye which cannot be removed using the techniques above, you should contact NHS 111 for advice

## Treatment

Most abrasions heal quickly. You may be given an antibiotic ointment to prevent infection.

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen is helpful but if you are taking other medication please consult with a pharmacist and follow the instructions carefully.

If your eye symptoms have not improved after 24 hours you should seek further advice.

## Recurrent abrasions or erosions

A small number of patients may experience problems after the initial injury is thought to have healed. This usually occurs during sleep and the person will wake up with discomfort in the eye. This is due to poor healing at the original injury site and will require further treatment.

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## **Contact information**

You may have been advised to make an appointment with the Eye Clinic for follow up. The Eye Clinic operates at both Cheltenham General Hospital and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

Please contact the triage nurse who will provide advice and information regarding which hospital site to attend.

### **Eye Clinic Triage Nurse**

Tel: 0300 422 3578

(Line open 8:00am to 6:00pm)

### **NHS 111**

Tel: 111

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