



Corneal abrasion

A corneal abrasion is a scratch on the cornea – the clear window on the front of your eye. Abrasions are very painful because there are many nerves that supply this part of the eye. With an abrasion, your eye is often watery, red and sensitive to light. Your eyelids may become swollen and your vision may be blurry.

What causes a corneal abrasion?

Scratches to the cornea are common. The cornea could be scratched by a hairbrush, a fingernail or a tree branch. It may be scratched when a small object such as a dust particle hits your eye. If a small foreign body becomes lodged under your eyelid, this can cause scratches on your cornea.

What is the treatment?

A corneal scratch usually heals on its own and the pain settles over 24 to 48 hours, but your eye may feel gritty for several weeks. Eye infection could develop following a scratch to the cornea, so antibiotic eye drops or ointment is prescribed for several days to prevent this in most cases. You may be prescribed a pupil dilating drop, which may help to relieve the painful spasms of the iris, and occasionally, an eye pad may be applied for several hours.

Anaesthetic drops are only given to numb your eye to help with your examination. They are not prescribed to take home as they will slow corneal healing if used regularly. Please remember that the pain will come back once the anaesthetic has worn off, usually after 20 to 60 minutes.

Painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (if you have no medical reason which prevents you using non-steroidal painkillers) are available over the counter at a chemist or on prescription and can be used to help with the pain.

Other advice

- Sunglasses may help reduce light sensitivity
- Avoid rubbing or touching your eye
- You may also be advised to use lubricants (artificial tear drops or ointment) to help keep your eye moist while it heals
- If you wear contact lenses, please do not use them until your eye is completely healed (usually within two to four weeks)

Sometimes, though it feels as if the abrasion had healed, you can wake up in the morning several weeks or months

following with a feeling that the discomfort from the abrasion has returned. If this happens, **don't panic**, but re-attend the A&E department where they will treat you for this recurrent abrasion as before but might also give you lubricant eye ointment for use at night.

When to seek advice

In most cases, you will not need to return for a further check-up. However, if your eyesight becomes more blurred over time or if the pain and redness are getting a lot worse, you should telephone Moorfields Eye Hospital Direct for advice on 020 7566 2345 or attend your local A&E department or the Moorfields 24/7 A&E department which is open for emergency eye problems **only** for a further examination.

Author: Miss Melanie Hingorani, Dr Swan Kang and Linda Langton
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Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

