

# What is a corneal abrasion?

## Information for patients from Ophthalmology

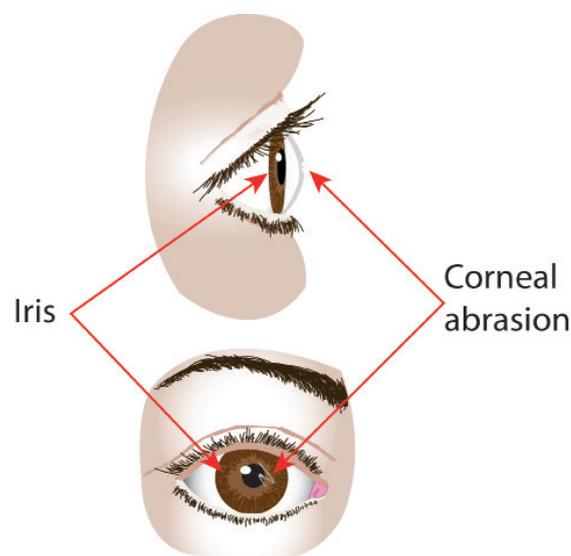
This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

### What is a cornea?

The cornea is the clear tissue covering the front of the eye. It is the main focusing element of the eye. Light shines through it to the back of the eye allowing us to see.

### What is a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion happens when the surface of the cornea is damaged. If the nerves are exposed the eye becomes painful.



### How long will the abrasion take to heal?

With treatment, corneal abrasions heal within one to two days. Larger or deeper abrasions may take longer.



## How will I know that I have an abrasion?

You may have a corneal abrasion if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- pain or a foreign body sensation (the feeling you have something in your eye)
- watering or a sticky discharge from your eye
- light sensitivity (your eye hurts when exposed to daylight)
- redness
- swollen eyelids
- reduced vision.

## What causes a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion is a common eye injury which can happen at home, at work, or during your leisure time. Common causes include:

- foreign bodies (such as small particles) on the surface of the eye, or underneath the eyelid
- scratches caused by fingernails, plants, twigs, paper, or card
- blunt injury, for example being hit with a squash ball or fist
- contact lenses.

## How is a corneal abrasion treated?

Your eye will be examined by a doctor or a nurse using a slit lamp microscope to assess your injury (a local anaesthetic drop to numb the area may be needed to do this). The treatment that you are given will depend on the size and depth of your corneal abrasion.

You may be given **antibiotic ointment** which will be put into your eye and a pad applied. This allows your eye to rest and prevents the eyelid from rubbing away the new cells that are repairing the cornea. Alternatively you may be given a **drop** which will dilate (make bigger) the pupil to relieve muscle spasm of the iris (the coloured part of the eye). Again a pad may be applied.

## Will the treatment hurt?

Depending on how bad your abrasion is, the antibiotic ointment/drops may sting when applied. This is normal and will not last long.

## Will I have to stay in hospital?

You will be treated for your corneal abrasion as an outpatient. Some patients may be admitted to hospital overnight, but this is rare and will be discussed with you by your doctor or nurse.

## Are there any side effects to either treatment?

If you have been given the drop, when the pad is removed the pupil may still be enlarged and your vision slightly blurred. The effects of the drop could last for at least four hours.

## Is there anything I should avoid after the treatment?

For safety reasons do not drive or operate machinery whilst wearing the eye pad or whilst your vision is affected by the drops.

### Will I need a follow-up appointment?

Whether you have a follow-up appointment will depend on how bad your abrasion is. This will be discussed with you by your doctor or nurse before you leave hospital.

### How do I look after my eye at home?

You may have been given antibiotic eye drops or ointment to take home, and to help prevent infection. The following outlines which medication you have been prescribed and how long you need to use it for.

- **Name of the medication**

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- **Please start drops on**

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- **Please wear your patch until**

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A bandage contact lens may also be used. This is designed to protect an injured or diseased cornea from the mechanical rubbing of the blinking eyelids, which will allow your cornea to heal.

### Further information

If you have any questions or concerns when you return home please contact the ophthalmology emergency nurse-led service on 07887 804133 (mobile).

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145 or 01227 864314, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)