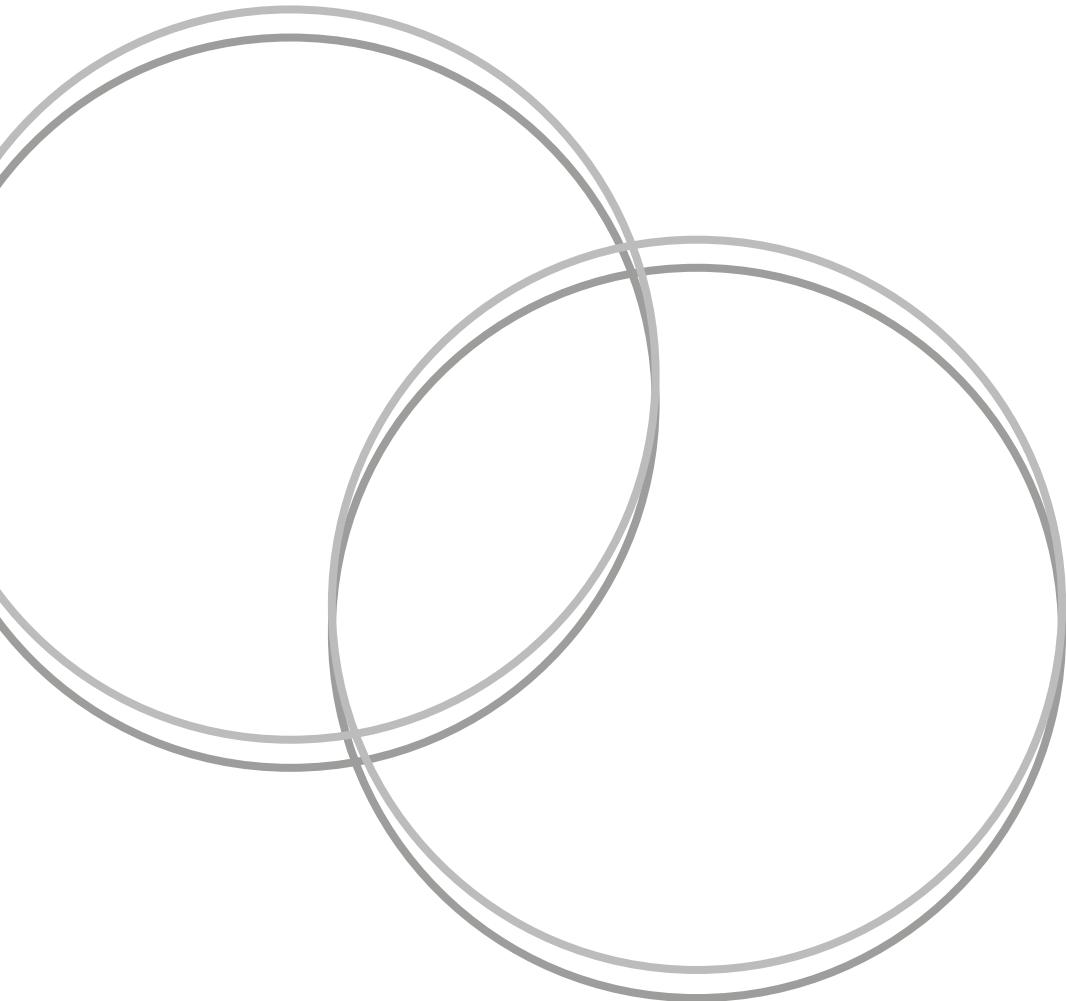


# **Understanding Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome**

**Information for patients**





# What is Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome?

Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome (RCES) is a condition that affects the cornea, the transparent outer layer of the eye. It occurs when the cells on the surface of the cornea become loose and detached from the underlying tissue. This leads to the person experiencing episodes of pain, redness, and sensitivity to light.

## Causes of RCES:

- 1. Corneal Trauma:** Previous injury to the cornea, such as a scratch or abrasion, can weaken the surface. Weaker surfaces are more likely to breakdown repeatedly without healing properly. A finger poke to the eye may seem minor, but it can cause significant damage to the delicate corneal tissue. Even after the initial abrasion has healed, the area can remain weak and become susceptible to recurrent breakdown or erosion. This cycle of erosion and attempted healing eventually leads to RCES.
- 2. Corneal Dystrophy:** Some people inherit conditions that affect the structure of the cornea, making it more susceptible to erosion.
- 3. Dry Eye Syndrome:** If people do not produce enough tears, or the quality of their tears is poor, this can lead to dryness of the cornea, which increases the risk of erosion.

## **People with RCES may have the following symptoms:**

- Intense pain, often described as a feeling of something gritty or sharp pain in the eye. They may be woken up by severe pain during sleep.
- Redness and watering of the eye.
- Sensitivity to light (photophobia).
- Blurred vision, particularly upon awakening.

## **Treatment options**

- 1. Artificial Tears:** Lubricating eye drops help keep the cornea moist, reducing friction between the lid and the cornea. This will reduce the episodes of recurrent surface breakdown.
- 2. Ointments/gels:** Applying an ointment or gel at bedtime can prevent the eyelids from sticking to the cornea during sleep, reducing the likelihood of surface breakdown upon waking. Both lubricating eye drops and ointments also promote healing and reduce the risk of recurrent erosions.
- 3. Bandage Contact Lenses:** In severe cases, these special lenses can protect the cornea and promote healing.
- 4. Debridement:** In some cases, removing the poorly healed surface cells can help regenerate a more coherent layer of cells which do not breakdown easily.
- 5. Medications:** Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic or anti-inflammatory medications, alongside the above treatments, to reduce inflammation and prevent infection.
- 6. Phototherapeutic Keratectomy (PTK):** In severe cases where other treatments have failed, PTK may be recommended. This procedure uses laser technology to remove the damaged layer of surface cells and allows the new cells to regrow properly. You may be referred to a different hospital to have this procedure done.

## **Preventing recurrences:**

- Avoid rubbing your eyes, especially when they feel dry or irritated.
- Use protective eyewear during activities that could pose a risk of eye injury.
- Follow your doctor's recommendations for managing underlying conditions such as dry eye syndrome.

## **Risk of infections with Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome (RCES)**

When recurrent corneal erosions occur, there is an increased risk of developing infections in the affected eye. The breakdown of the corneal surface weakens the eye's natural defence barrier, making it more susceptible to infections.

## **Symptoms of infection:**

- Increased pain, redness, and swelling in the affected eye.
- Pus-like discharge from the eye.
- Blurred or reduced vision.
- Sensitivity to light (photophobia).
- Feeling of something foreign in the eye.

## **Prevention:**

- To minimise the risk of infections, it is crucial to follow your doctor's recommendations for managing recurrent corneal erosions, including the use of lubricating eye drops or ointments and avoiding activities that may make symptoms worse.
- Practice good hygiene, including washing your hands frequently and avoiding touching your eyes with unwashed hands to reduce the risk of introducing harmful microorganisms.

If you suspect an infection or experience worsening symptoms despite treatment for recurrent corneal erosions, contact the Eye Casualty Triage Line (**01865 234567**) immediately for further evaluation and management.

## **When to seek medical attention:**

- If you experience severe eye pain or sudden changes in vision.
- If symptoms persist or worsen despite treatment.
- If you have a history of RCES and experience a new episode of corneal erosion.

## **Conclusion**

Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome can be a challenging condition, but with proper treatment and preventive measures, many people are able to manage their symptoms effectively.



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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