



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Corneal Abrasion

Information for patients



Oxford Eye Hospital

What is a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion is a scratch on the cornea, the clear front surface of the eye. It is very painful because this part of the eye contains many nerves.

You may notice:

- a painful, watery, red eye
- light sensitivity
- blurred vision
- eyelid swelling
- a gritty or foreign-body sensation.

What causes a corneal abrasion?

Scratches are common and can occur if:

- A fingernail, makeup brush or object hits the eye.
- A small piece of dust or grit gets trapped under the eyelid.
- A branch or leaf catches the surface of the eye.
- You remove or wear contact lenses incorrectly.

How is it treated?

Corneal scratches usually heal quickly. Pain typically improves within **24-48 hours**, although the eye may feel gritty for longer.

Treatment may include:

- **Antibiotic eye drops** or ointment to prevent infection.
- **Pupil-dilating drops** to reduce pain from muscle spasm.
- **Eye padding** for a short time if advised.

Anaesthetic eye drops are used only during examination. They are **not** given to take home because they slow healing. Pain returns once they wear off, usually within an hour.

You can use over-the-counter pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, provided these are safe for you to take.

If you are unsure how to apply eye drops, search online for **“NHS eye drop technique video”**.

Additional self-care advice

- Wear sunglasses to reduce light sensitivity.
- **Do not** rub or press on the eye.
- Use artificial tear drops or ointment to keep the eye moist.
- Avoid contact lenses until the eye is fully healed.
(usually 2-4 weeks, depending on severity)

Sometimes symptoms return weeks or months later, especially on waking. This may be **recurrent corneal erosion**. The A&E team can treat this and may recommend lubricating ointment at night

When to seek urgent advice

Most people recover without a return visit. You should seek **urgent** help if:

- Pain or redness gets worse.
- Vision becomes more blurred.
- Discharge develops from the eye.
- You are concerned the eye is not improving.

Contacting us

If you have a minor eye problem, please seek advice from your GP, optician or pharmacist.

Call our specialist telephone triage number if you need **URGENT** help or advice or if you notice:

- Redness and/or swelling of your eye lids and/or eyeball
- Any loss of sight
- Intense pain

Telephone: **01865 234 567**, select the option for “Eye Emergencies”

Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

Saturday and Sunday 8:30am to 3:30pm (including Bank Holidays)

You will be able to speak to an ophthalmic health professional who will advise you.

If you need advice out of hours, please phone **NHS 111** or your out of hours GP practice.

Further information:

Visit the NHS Website – www.nhs.uk

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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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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