

# Eye infections of the cornea

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Patients

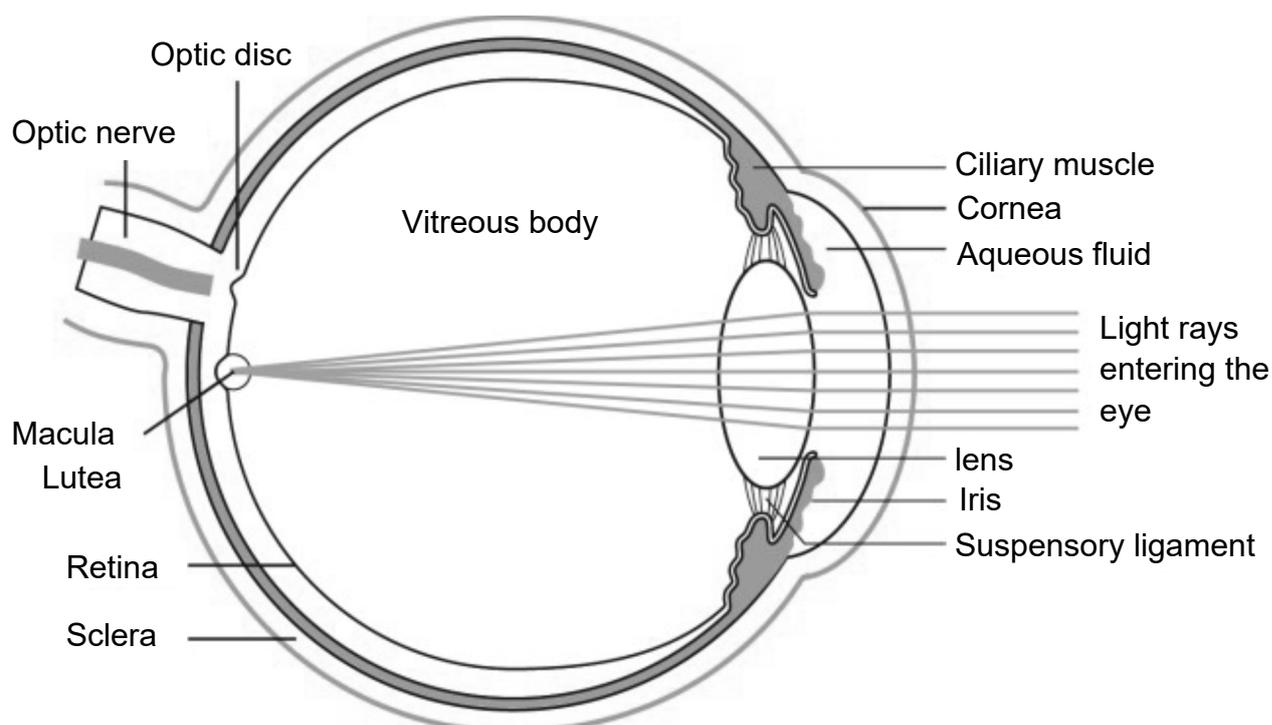
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## Introduction

This leaflet is about infection in the cornea. This is the clear part at the front of the eye. This leaflet will help you understand the treatment you need.



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## What kind of eye infection do I have?

Eye infections are normally described by the area that is infected:

- Conjunctivitis: white part of the eye.
- Blepharitis: eyelids.
- Keratitis: clear part at the front of the eye.
- Vitritis: liquid inside of the eye.
- Chorioretinitis: back of the eye and blood vessels.
- Neuroretinitis: nerves that work with eye.

In the corneal clinic we care for patients with severe conjunctival and corneal infections. Simple infections can be managed in eye casualty.

## What causes eye infections?

Eye infections are split into different groups:

- Bacterial: such as sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, Lyme disease.
- Viral: such as shingles, herpes.
- Fungal: such as candida.
- Parasitic: such as ancanthamebia.

Each will be treated with different medication.

## What are the signs of an eye infection?

Signs of infection are:

- Pain, itching, feeling something in your eye.
- Reduced vision.
- Pain when in bright light (photosensitivity).
- Redness or small red lines on white of eye.
- Discharge of yellow puss, that may be crusty on waking up.
- Tears.
- Swollen eyelids.
- Constant uncontrolled blinking.

## Testing for the cause of infection

Before treatment starts we may need to test the infected area. We do this to find out the cause of the infection. We use a method called a corneal scrape. We will give you drops to numb the eye. Then we will scrape the front surface of the eye with a needle or a blade to send for testing. We can also use a cotton bud to swab the area and test for infection. This will be done in Eye Casualty or clinic.

We can get an idea of what the infection is within a few hours. It can take a few weeks before we have a definite results. The results confirm which treatment needs to be used. The corneal scrape results can take a while to be processed because the laboratories grow the samples to see what caused the infection.

We may need to repeat the corneal scrape if we do not see any improvement, or if results come back negative.

Sometimes we do not get any results from the test. We check how the infection is reacting to the drugs, and this is how we decide on which drops to use.

We will treat the eye with the correct treatment depending on what the infection looks like.

## Treatment

The type of treatment depends on the infection. You must continue treatment unless you are asked to stop by the eye doctor.

In all cases you will need hourly eye drops. This would be for 48 hours. You must take these eye drops as explained by the doctor. If you have a bad infection we may admit you into hospital to make sure you get the correct medicine. You must take eye drops as advised or the infection will get worse. You could get a permanent loss of vision.

We will review you in clinic. This could be daily for a period of time. This is important because the eye drops are very strong and need close monitoring until we can see an improvement in symptoms.

For some infections we may give you medicine to take by mouth with your eye drops. You may also need to have blood tests.

The eye drops can be a mixture of antibiotics, anti viral, and steroids. In some cases we can use disinfecting drops.



## How long will I need treatment?

This depends on what infection you have. Some infections can take months or longer to treat.

You will need to come to the hospital on a regular basis, and you may need time off work. Your eye infection may be painful and your vision might be affected.

Your GP can give you a sick note if you need longer than 1 week off work.

## Outcome of treatment

Some infections get better with no damage to the cornea.

Scarring can happen on the cornea. It can get better with steroid eye drops. But it may affect your vision permanently. It depends on the severity and position of the scar. There may be some options to remove the scar, which we can talk about with you in clinic.

## What should I do if I think there is a problem?

You will have regular appointments in clinic. If you have any concerns, you can contact the specialist nurse team on **0797 094 0125**

Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm (an answer phone message can be left).

If out of the above hours, please go to Eye Casualty: **0116 258 6273**

Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 4.30pm,

Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays: 8.30am to 12.30pm.

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