Surgery to remove tissue (pterygium) growing across your cornea

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Patients

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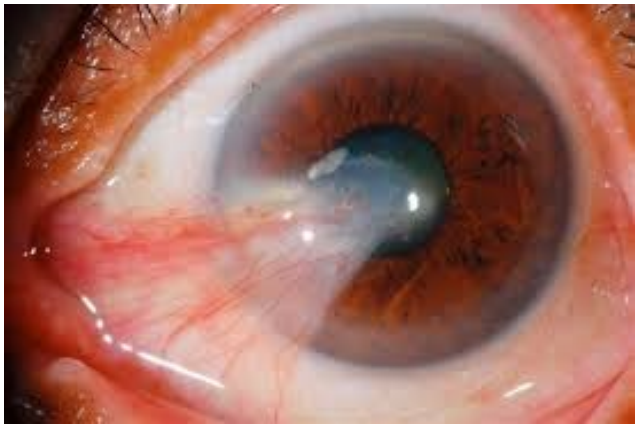
What is a pterygium?



A **pterygium** is a skin that grows on the clear bit of the eye (cornea). It is usually on the cornea near the nose. It can cause pain and redness and it may slowly grow larger. If it grows it can affect the shape of the cornea. This can change your vision. A pterygium is non-cancerous.

Up to 33% or a third of the world's population get pterygium. It is more common in men and in people who live closer to the equator. As you get older you are more likely to have them. Spending lots of time in the sun can make them more likely to happen.

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Why do I need the surgery?

If pterygium is not removed, it can continue to grow over your eye which will affect your vision. This can also change the shape of the cornea and cause pain by making the smooth surface of the eye bumpy and uneven.

We only remove pterygium if they are causing pain, or will change your vision.

If you are having a cataract operation we sometimes need to remove pterygium first, as it can affect the test we do to work out which lens to put in your eye.

What happens during the surgery?

The surgery is done while you are awake. We put numbing eye drops in the eye (local anaesthetic);. We then inject local anaesthetic around the eye. You should not feel any pain, you may feel pressure, most people say they feel nothing.

A paper drape is placed over your face. It sticks to the skin around your eye. This keeps the eye clean during surgery. The eyelids are held open with a clip. The doctor will remove the pterygium.

We move some of your white eye skin (conjunctiva) into the gap where we removed the pterygium from (conjunctival auto-grafting). This is glued into place. This can reduce the risk of the pterygium growing back.

The place where we take the white eye skin from will heal itself.

What are the benefits?

- To stop the pterygium changing your vision.
- To stop any pain you are having.
- To help with your cataract surgery.

What are the risks of the procedure?

- Infection.
- Allergy to drops.
- The eye might have a bumpy surface. You might need to take eye drops for a long time.
- Vison can change for 3 months after surgery, as the shape of the cornea settles
- The tissue we have glued onto the eye can become loose. If this happens you

need to come back to the hospital urgently so we can look at your eye

- There can be some scarring on the cornea.
- The pterygium could come back again. The tissue we glue into the space should reduce the risk of this.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be given something to eat and drink after surgery. We will tell you how and when to take your eye drops. This will be decided by the surgeon. It will include a reducing dose of steroid eye drops.

It is important to only use the steroid eye drops for as long as you are told to, as they can cause increased eye pressure. You should go to your follow-up appointments so we can check the pressure.

The local anaesthetic can last for a while after surgery, this is different for everyone. The eye may feel quite sore for a few days. You can take regular painkiller tablets if needed, such as paracetamol. This takes a few days to heal.

You must take the eye drops as explained as they are needed to help your eye heal.

Do not stop any glaucoma drops unless we have told you to.

You need to take the drops for several weeks. If you are running out please ring the secretary or specialist nurse.

Do not stop the drops until the clinic doctor tells you to.

Do not get any tap water in the eye for 1 month. Use boiled water that has cooled down.

The eye will look very red after surgery. This can take around 2 to 3 weeks to go.

You will be seen in clinic around 2 weeks after your operation.

You might need a new prescription for your glasses. You need to wait 3 months before you check this.

You will need 2 weeks off work, to reduce the risk of infection and let your eye heal.

You may not feel able to drive while your eye is sore, it is your decision when you feel able to drive. Depending on the size of the pterygium removed, your vision may change in your operated eye. If you are not sure you are safe to drive, you can speak to your optician or insurance company.

What to do if you think there is a problem

Most patients recover from this procedure with no issues.

If you have any worries after your surgery you can ring the specialist nurse team on:

07970 940125 Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm.

We cannot always answer the phone or listen to messages on the same day you call. If urgent please go to Eye Casualty.

If you run out of eye drops contact our secretary on 0116 258 5913

Please go to Eye Casualty right away if:

- Your eye gets more red or painful and you have a drop in vision. This could be a sign of infection.
- You have more redness, itching, swelling of eyelid or a watery eye. This could be a sign of allergy.

Eye Casualty - 0116 258 6273

Windsor Building Level 1, Leicester Royal Infirmary

They are open Monday to Friday- 8.30am to 4.30pm

Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays - 8.30am to 12.30pm

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