

Scratch to the eye (corneal abrasion)

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: August 2025

Next review: August 2028

Leaflet number: 989 Version: 3

What is a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion is a scratch or scrape on the front of the cornea. The cornea is the clear part of the eye that covers the coloured part (iris) and the black centre (pupil). Its surface is very sensitive.

Injuries to the cornea can include paper cuts, injuries from branches and mascara brushes. You will know when you have scratched the cornea as it is very painful. If the pain continues after the injury you are likely to have a scrape (abrasion).

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is pain. You will feel a lot of pain in the eye. Even a very small abrasion can cause a lot of pain. Most people are unable to open their eyes. The symptoms are:

- having a lot of pain with or without obvious injury.
- having pain that does not go away after an injury.
- feeling like something is in your eye.
- knowing something is in your eye, such as dirt, small particles or a splinter.
- being very sensitive to bright light.
- having watering or tearing from your eye.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

Do not rub your eye as it can make it worse. Do not rub your eye if you have something in your eye. It may go deeper into your eye.

If you have a lot of pain after an injury go to Eye Casualty (or Emergency Department if outside of Eye Casualty hours).

You can take painkillers to help with the pain. You should not drive to Eye Casualty.

What treatment will I get?

- We will numb your eye with drops. This will make it less painful when we look at it.
- We will check the front of your eye. We will look for things like dirt or a splinter.
- We will check your eye for any infection.
- There is a risk of getting an infection when the surface of the eye is damaged. We will give you antibiotic eye drops or ointment to stop infection. This will also help with comfort. You should use this 4 times a day for 1 week. We may give you more drops or ointment to help the surface heal.
- Do not wear contact lenses until the cornea has healed.
- If the abrasion is large (covering more than half of the cornea), we may give you eye drops to enlarge (dilate) the pupil to help with the pain.

Will the abrasion heal?

There should be no problems with cornea healing. The pain may last from a few hours up to 3 days. This depends on the size of the abrasion. If the abrasion is deep or large we will see you in clinic again to make sure it is healing.

Sometimes a corneal abrasion can cause long term issues. You can have recurrent erosion syndrome. This is where the original injury stops the outer layer healing properly. You can get the same pain as with the abrasion, normally when you wake up in the morning.

You must follow the treatment we give you as it can stop this problem. If you get pain in the future you will need long term treatment. You can visit your optician or GP to be referred back to hospital if needed.

How do I avoid eye injuries?

Wear protective glasses. Wear them where there is a risk of getting anything in the eye like when gardening or painting.

Contact details

In an emergency contact your GP or Leicester's Hospitals Eye Casualty on
0116 258 6273

Eye Casualty opening times:

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm

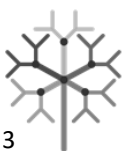
Weekends and Bank Holidays, 8.30am to 12.30pm

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net



LEICESTER'S
RESEARCH ★

Leicester's Hospitals is a research active trust so you may find research happening on your ward or in your clinic. To find out about the benefits of research and become involved yourself, speak to your clinician or nurse, call 0116 258 8351 or visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk/research/patients-public/be-part-of-our-research/