

Corneal Abrasions:

CAUSES, SYMPTOMS, AND TREATMENT



Our sense of sight allows us to enjoy our surroundings and facilitates many of the activities in our daily lives. Approximately 80% of the information from our environment is gathered and perceived by way of our eyes. However, this precious gift does not come without responsibility. To help maintain and preserve one's eyesight, involves regular vision care as well as using the appropriate protective eyewear when necessary. An unfortunate eye injury, even a seemingly mild one, if not properly managed has the potential to cause serious complications.

One of the most common eye injuries seen by optometrists is a corneal abrasion, which is also referred to as a "scratched cornea". This injury is the result of trauma to the surface of the eye. A corneal abrasion can occur after an unfortunate poke in the eye by objects like a pencil, a make-up applicator, a piece of paper, a branch, or even a fingernail. It may also be caused by airborne particles such as dust, sand, or flying debris that can become embedded in the cornea. In some cases a damaged, improperly cleaned, or over worn contact lens can scratch the cornea. Additionally, individuals who have previously scratched their corneas, or who have a condition that is associated with defects in the surface of their cornea, may experience a spontaneous corneal abrasion that happens without an obvious cause.

The cornea is the transparent & domelike front part of your eye. It covers both the colored portion of the eye, known as the iris and the round dark pupil located in the center. A healthy cornea is essential for good vision. It focuses entering light onto the lens while filtering out some of the most damaging wavelengths of sunlight. The cornea also assists in shielding the eye from germs, dust, and other harmful matter.

As one of the most richly innervated tissues in the human body, the cornea is exquisitely sensitive to even the slightest injury. This is why a corneal abrasion, even if it is very small, can cause you significant pain and discomfort.



Symptoms of a corneal abrasion may include:

- Pain
- A gritty feeling that there is something in your eye
- Tearing
- Redness
- Sensitivity to light
- Blurry or distorted vision
- Headache
- Spasm of the muscles surrounding your eye

Due to the discomfort caused by a scratched cornea and the complications that can develop as a result of this injury, it is essential to have your eye doctor examine the eye as soon as possible. With timely and appropriate care most superficial corneal abrasions heal well and you will experience a full recovery. However, if left untreated a scratched cornea can lead to a bacterial or fungal infection, and further damage that may result in permanent visual impairment. A mild corneal abrasion that has been treated almost always improves or is resolved within the first few days. When a more severe abrasion is present, the symptoms will last longer. Deeper abrasions may cause corneal scarring, which can interfere with vision.

When a corneal abrasion occurs, it is important to exercise some precautions so as not to cause more harm to your eye. Do not rub or apply pressure to the injured eye, and do not to make any attempts to remove particles stuck to the cornea.

The eye doctor will determine the specific treatment for your corneal abrasion once the extent of the injury has been fully evaluated. Based on the severity of your corneal abrasion treatment may include antibiotic drops or ointment to prevent infection, a steroid to decrease inflammation, as well something to relieve light sensitivity and pain. Your optometrist may schedule a follow-up visit to monitor your progress and healing. If you wear contact lenses you will also be advised at what point in your recovery that you can resume wearing them.

Although accidents will happen, many eye injuries can be avoided. According to statistics, an estimated 90 percent of eye injuries are preventable with the use of the appropriate protective eyewear. Simply by choosing to wear safety glasses, sports goggles, or sunglasses when needed, you can significantly reduce your risk of a corneal abrasion as well other eye injuries.



"It never hurts your eyesight to look on the bright side of things."