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# Corneal Abrasion Advice

## What is a Corneal Abrasion?

It is a small scratch or graze (abrasion) on the surface of the eye. The cornea is the thin 'skin' that covers the coloured part of the eye. It is confirmed when an orange dye (fluorescein) which we put into your eye, is taken up onto the damaged eye surface and shows up under a blue light. Abrasions are very painful because there are many nerves that supply the cornea. The pain gets better as your eye heals, but this can take between 24 and 48 hours. If the abrasion involves the central part of your cornea, your vision could also be temporarily affected.

## Why does a corneal injury occur?

- Something gets into your eye, for example, when the wind blows dust particle into your eye, which may scratch the cornea.
- When you are poked accidentally in the eye with, for example a finger.
- You rub your eyes excessively when they are irritated.
- Wearing contact lenses longer than recommended
- Workplace related injuries like grinding metals, wood chips

**Please remember to always wear eye protection when you drill, saw, etc, which can cause small particles to get into your eye(s). Also when welding, skiing, mountaineering, using sunbeds, and in any other situation where there is a lot of light radiation.**

## What are the symptoms?

- Pain, redness, watering
- A feeling that there is something in your eye that you can't get out. This may develop a few hours later rather than straight away.
- Photophobia - eye pain when exposed to a bright light
- Blurred or distortion of vision
- Spasm of the muscles surrounding your eye causing you to squint
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**If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant  
Minor Injury Unit (MIU):  
Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056  
Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073  
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) 01443 802353 or 802349  
Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB): 01495 363818  
Or Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287**

### What treatment will I need?

You might be given antibiotic ointment to prevent secondary infection - see over for how to use your medication.

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always make sure that your ointment or drops are closed properly and stored in a cool place.</li><li>• Take pain killers if you have discomfort in your eye. Paracetamol can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol.</li></ul> <p><b>With all the medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you wear contact lenses don't use them until your eye is healed and for 24 hours after the last dose of any eye drop or ointment.</li><li>• Use the ointment / drops beyond the number of days you have been advised.</li></ul>

### Application of Eye ointment

Always read the instructions on the label and only treat the eye that you are supposed to. Apply the ointment as often as prescribed, in the following way:

- Wash your hands.
  - Stand in front of a mirror and use a clean finger to gently pull down your lower eyelid to create a pocket.
  - Apply about 1cm ribbon of the ointment into this pocket at the inner corner, moving to the outer corner of the eye.
  - Blink to spread the medication over your eye and keep it closed for 30 seconds.
- If you find it difficult to put your ointment in by yourself, get somebody else to do it for you. Your eyesight may be blurry for a short time afterwards, so you should not drive or operate machinery until you can see properly again.

You need to protect your eye following the use of the local anaesthetic so you may be given an eye pad to wear. Unless you have been told otherwise you should keep this on for an hour – after which time the effects of the anaesthetic will have worn off. You can wear sunglasses instead.

### First Aid for your eye

If you get loose particles in your eye or your eye has been exposed to chemicals, you should flush it out with plenty of clean water (or an eyewash) for at least 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contact lenses, remember to remove them first

## Flushing your eye

You can flush your eyes in the following ways:

Sit down and tip your head so the injured eye is lower than the unaffected eye, ideally over a bath or sink, then use a glass or cupped hand to repeatedly pour water across the eye from the bridge of the nose for at least 20 minutes.

If both eyes are affected, tilt your head back, keeping it level, and use a glass or cupped hand to repeatedly pour water across both eyes from the bridge of the nose. If you have access to a shower, aim a gentle stream of warm water at your forehead or just above the affected eye while holding the affected eye open.

**If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within**

**3 - 4 days, we advise you to contact your GP or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.**

### **References:**

Corneal superficial injury | Health topics A to Z | CKS | NICE

Eye injuries - NHS

**This document is available in Welsh/  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**