

Pterygium

Patient Information

Eye Unit



What is Pterygium?

Pterygium is a benign (non-cancerous) growth of tissue on the surface of the eye. It starts on the white part of the eye (conjunctiva) and can grow onto the cornea (the clear window of the eye). It is sometimes called the “**Surfers Eye**” because it is more common in people who spend a lot of time outdoors (exposed to sunlight, wind and dust).

What causes it?

1. Long term exposure to UV light (sunlight.)
2. Wind, dust or dry conditions.
3. Outdoor occupations or activities.
4. Chronic dry eye irritation or inflammation (it is not contagious and does not spread from person to person).

What symptoms I might notice?

Some people may have no symptoms especially when the Pterygium is small. Others may notice:

- Redness, irritation or inflammation.
- A gritty or dry feeling.
- A visible pinkish/fleshy growth on the white part of the eye.
- Blurred vision (if the pterygium grown onto the cornea).

Do all Pterygia need treatment?

No. Many are small and do not cause symptoms. Treatment depends on:

- The size of the pterygium.
- Whether it is progressing.
- If it is causing discomfort or affecting vision.

Treatment Options:

1. Conservative (Non-surgical treatment)

For mild symptoms:

- Lubricating eyedrops or gels - relieves dryness and irritation.
- Anti-inflammatory drops (short courses) - reduce redness or inflammation.
- Wearing UV-protective sunglasses outdoors - to prevent further growth
- Avoiding dusty, windy environments if possible.

These treatments help symptoms but will not shrink/remove the Pterygium

2. Surgical Removal

Recommended if:

- The Pterygium is growing close to or onto the central cornea.
- It affects vision or corneal shape (causing blurred or distorted vision).
- It causes persistent irritation/inflammation despite drops.

What the surgery involves:

- The Pterygium is removed under local anaesthetic.
- A conjunctival autograft (a small piece of healthy tissue from your own eye) is placed in the removed area to reduce the chance of recurrence.
- Dissolving stitches or tissue glue is used.

Recovery after the surgery:

- Most people **return to normal activities within 1-2 weeks.**
- You will be given antibiotic and anti-inflammatory drops.
- The eye will be blood shot for at least 2 weeks
- Mild redness or irritation/discomfort is normal for about 4-8 weeks
- Vision can fluctuate in the first few weeks
- Avoid rubbing the eyes for first 2 weeks to not displace the graft.
- Avoid swimming, dusty environments and heavy exercise for about 2-4 weeks.
- You need a follow up appointment to monitor healing.

Complications:

- Graft displacement
- Recurrence
- Scleral melt (very rare but serious complication)

Will the Pterygium come back?

Yes. It can return/regrow but with modern surgical techniques of using conjunctival graft, recurrence is much lower especially if you:

1. Wear UV-blocking sunglasses.
2. Use lubricating drops/gels regularly.
3. Avoid long exposure to wind and dust.
4. Follow post operative advice carefully.

Contact the Emergency Eye Clinic (EEC) Team if you notice:

1. Sudden drop in vision.
2. Increasing pain not relieved by medication.
3. Excessive discharge.
4. Severe redness or swelling.

Emergency Eye Clinic (EEC) Team (Tel: 01633 – 238856) - during working days/hours.

Weekend/Out of Hours: Ophthalmology on Call Team via switchboard:
01633- 234234

E-mail (only if needs advice): EmergencyEyeClinic.abb@wales.nhs.uk

Your Eyedrops Plan is as Follows:

The following drops should be applied to your operated eye only, starting the morning after surgery:

Eye drop	Time	Action
Dexamethasone 0.1% PF (preservative free)	1 drop, 4 times per day for 4 weeks or till further advice.	Steroid anti-inflammatory drops
Chloramphenicol 0.5 % PF (preservative free)	1 drop, 4 times a day for 2 weeks.	Antibiotic drops
Hylo Forte 0.2% or Hylo Tears 0.1%	1 drop, 4 times a day (or as required) for 4 weeks, but can be used long term.	Lubricating drops

Recording Chart for Chloramphenicol Eyedrops:

1 drop from each chloramphenicol vial, 4 times per day for **4** weeks or as per advice. (please tick)

Chloramphenicol	08.00 am	12.00 pm	04.00 pm	08.00 pm
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				
Day 8				
Day 9				
Day 10				
Day 11				
Day 12				
Day 13				
Day 14				
Chloramphenicol	08.00 am	12.00 pm	04.00 pm	08.00 pm
Day 15				
Day 16				
Day 17				
Day 18				
Day 19				
Day 20				
Day 21				
Day 22				
Day 23				
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Day 26				
Day 27				
Day 28				

Record Chart for Dexamethasone PF eye drops:

1 drop from each Dexamethasone vial, 4 times per day for 4 weeks or till further advice (please tick).

Day	8am	12 noon	4pm	8pm
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