

Corneal foreign bodies

Eye Clinic
Tel: 01271 322467

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

What is a corneal foreign body?

This is a term used to describe a small particle that has become adherent to or embedded in the surface of the cornea. This will cause irritation to the outer front surface of the eye.

What causes a corneal foreign body?

Foreign particles may typically be blown into the eye on a windy day or when gardening. Metal foreign bodies can go into the eye from grinding equipment and other power tools; when this happens, the metal foreign body might quickly turn rusty.

What are the symptoms?

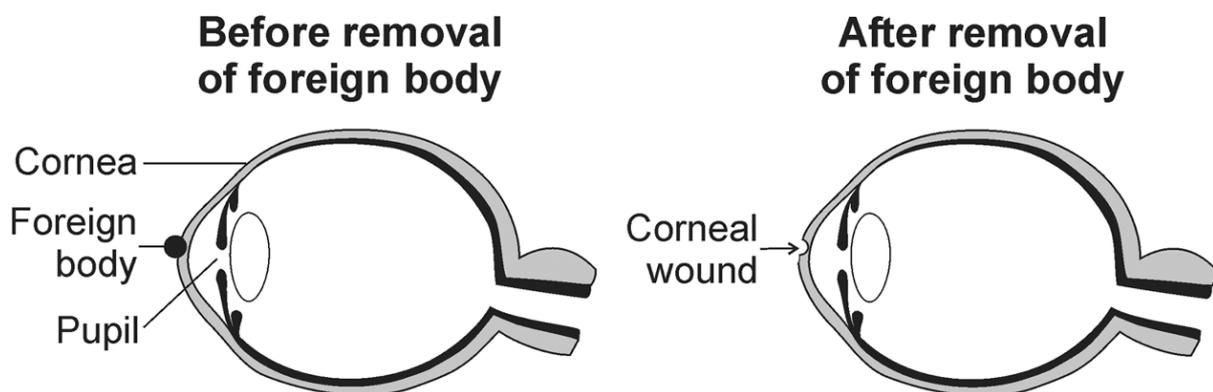
The symptoms you may experience include pain, redness, excessive watering, irritation and a feeling that there is something in the eye, sensitivity to light and blurred vision.

How is it treated?

The foreign body will need to be removed, or the eye will remain painful and inflamed. Anaesthetic drops are used before removing the foreign body to deaden the sensation of the cornea.

After the foreign body is removed, a small wound is left on the cornea. This usually starts to heal in 36 – 48 hours. However, the length of time may vary depending on how deeply the foreign body was embedded, the type of material and how long the foreign body has been on the surface of the eye.

Deeply embedded corneal foreign bodies may cause permanent scarring. If this scarring is in the middle of the cornea, your vision may become permanently blurred. You may be advised to see your optician if your vision remains blurred after the surface of your eye has healed. In the majority of cases your vision will return to normal.



Following removal of your corneal foreign body, you will be given a prescription of anti-biotic drops or ointment, usually to be taken four times daily for up to a one week.

Eye protection

When there is a risk of particles going into the eyes, it is very important that adequate protection is worn at all times.

If you are not satisfied with the eye protection provided by your place of work, speak to your employer or safety officer about it.

If particles enter the eye at high speed, from a grinding wheel or hammer and chisel, the particle can go through the cornea and into the inside of the eye. It is therefore always advisable to seek medical advice for these type of injuries.

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns please ask any member of the medical or nursing team or contact the Eye Clinic, Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 1pm.

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PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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