



Wasatch View Eye Care

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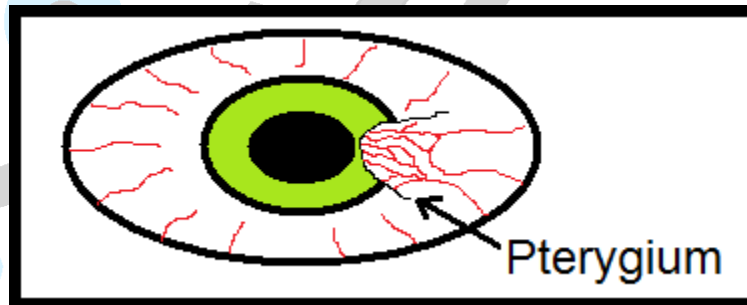
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Pterygium

Overview

A pterygium or “surfer’s eye” is an overgrowth of tissue that grows from the conjunctiva onto the cornea. It is the result of tissue that degenerates from exposure to ultraviolet light and the windy environments. Most often they have a triangular shape and are very vascularized. They are mostly cosmetic and only need to be monitored for growth or any impact on vision. When significant, they induce mild to large amounts of astigmatism. If they grow over the visual axis, there can be loss of best corrected visual acuity. Treatment consists of UV protection, ocular lubrication and surgical removal. Even with removal re-growth can occur.



Signs & Symptoms

Most patients notice a “growth” on their eye. Pterygium may cause irritation, scratchiness, and redness. When significant they may distort the cornea causing astigmatism and/or block the visual axis leading to decreased vision. They are typically very vascular; however, with inflammation they can become extremely red and irritated.

Causes

It is believed that pterygiums are the result of excessive exposure to the sun/ultraviolet light. Dryness and exposure to the wind may also play a role. They are more common in tropical areas that are near the equator and those that spend a lot of time in the sun (farmers, surfers, etc...). Ultraviolet light may break down the normal physiology and mechanisms of cells on the eye leading to the overgrowth.

Testing & Evaluation

Patients can often see the pterygium themselves. An eye doctor will look more closely at it with a biomicroscope. The eye doctor will note its overall size, length of growth from the white part of the

eye and how close it is to the visual axis. A refraction should be done to determine if there is any induced astigmatism.

Treatment

To avoid enlarging the pterygium there needs to be avoidance of ultraviolet light through the use of sunglasses and hats to protect the eyes. Frequent ocular lubrication is also helpful. For removal surgical excision is required. An application of Mitomycin C and an amniotic membrane after surgery may help to reduce recurrence.

Websites

American Optometric Association:

<https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/pterygium?sso=y>

All About Vision: <https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/pterygium.htm>

National Eye Institute:

<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/corneal-conditions/other-types-corneal-disease>

