

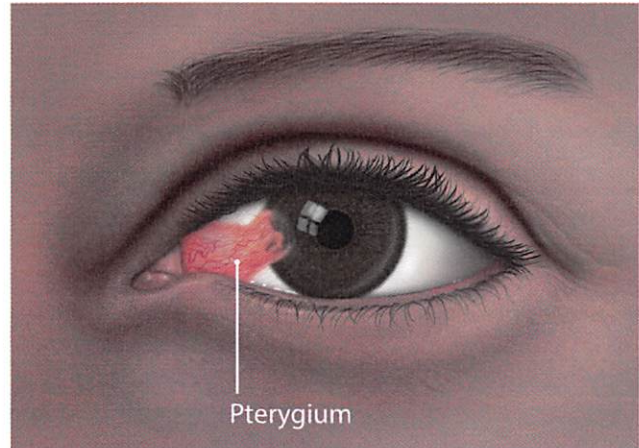


Pterygium Treatment

What is a pterygium?

A pterygium (pronounced "ter IDJ ee um") is a wedge-shaped bump of fleshy tissue that grows on the white of the eye. It may begin to grow toward the center of the eye, over the cornea. This common eye condition is also known as "surfer's eye" or "farmer's eye." This is because pterygia usually affect people who spend a lot of time in the sun.

A pterygium may stay small, or it may grow larger. If it grows large enough to irritate the eye or block vision, an ophthalmologist can remove it.



How is a pterygium treated?

For a smaller pterygium, eye drops or an eye ointment may help clear redness and soothe irritation.

A larger pterygium that affects your comfort or your sight can be removed with surgery. In the most common procedure, the pterygium is removed and healthy tissue from another part of your eye is put in its place (called conjunctival autograft). This outpatient procedure will take place in a surgery center or a hospital. Your ophthalmologist is usually able to remove the growth in under 45 minutes.

Eye Words to Know

Cornea: Clear, front window of the eye.

Conjunctiva: Thin, filmy membrane that covers the white part of your eye (called the sclera).

What to expect with pterygium surgery

Your eye will be numbed using a needle or eye drops. Your eye surgeon will remove the pterygium. Then the surgeon will take healthy tissue from somewhere else on the conjunctiva to fill in the hole left by the pterygium.

After surgery, you probably will need to wear an eye patch for a day or two. Your eye surgeon will tell you when you can return to your normal activities.

Your ophthalmologist may have you use steroid eye drops for several weeks after surgery.

This medicine should help keep swelling down in your eye and prevent the pterygium from growing back.

It is possible that having pterygium surgery can change the shape of the cornea, making your vision blurry. This condition is called astigmatism.

It is also possible that a pterygium can grow back after surgery. Here are ways to help keep a pterygium from growing back:

- Wear sunglasses that wrap around the sides of your face to protect your eyes from sunlight.
- Protect your eyes in dry, dusty conditions with wraparound sunglasses, goggles or other proper eyewear.
- Use artificial tears in your eyes when you are in dry conditions.
- Take your eye drops as prescribed by your ophthalmologist.

Get more information about pterygium from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at aao.org/surfers-eye-link.

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