

Pterygium: causes, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.

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Description

Pterygium, pronounced ter-IJ-ee-um, is a relatively common eye condition that can cause discomfort and visual disturbances. While not usually sight-threatening, it can be a source of annoyance and concern for those affected by it. Pterygium, often referred to as "surfer's eye" due to its association with outdoor activities, is a non-cancerous, wedge-shaped growth of tissue on the eye's surface. It typically occurs on the conjunctiva, which is the clear, thin membrane covering the white part of the eye (sclera). Pterygium usually develops on the side of the eye closer to the nose but can occur on either eye.

Pterygium is most commonly associated with prolonged exposure to UV radiation from the sun. This is why it is often seen in people who spend a lot of time outdoors, such as surfers, gardeners, and outdoor workers. UV exposure can lead to changes in the conjunctiva, potentially triggering pterygium formation. Environmental factors, such as dry and dusty or windy conditions, can irritate the eyes and contribute to pterygium development. There is evidence to suggest that genetics may play a role in pterygium. Some people may be more predisposed to developing pterygium due to their family history.

Pterygium can cause a variety of symptoms, which may range from mild to severe. The affected area of the eye may become red and inflamed. Pterygium can cause itching, burning, and a feeling of grittiness in the eye, leading to discomfort. As the pterygium grows, it can extend onto the cornea, affecting the clarity of vision. This can result in blurred or distorted vision. Many individuals with pterygium report feeling as though a foreign object is present in their eye. The growth of pterygium can alter the shape of the cornea, leading to astigmatism, which causes distorted vision. It is important to note that not all pterygium cases progress to the point of causing significant symptoms or vision problems. However, due to its potential for growth and discomfort, medical evaluation and treatment may be necessary. Diagnosing pterygium typically involves a comprehensive eye examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. The doctor will examine the affected eye, looking for the characteristic wedge-shaped growth on the conjunctiva. Additional tests may be performed to assess the extent of any vision problems caused by the pterygium, such as visual acuity tests and corneal topography.

Treatment options for pterygium depend on the severity of the condition and the associated symptoms. In mild cases,

observation and preventive measures may be sufficient. However, in more severe cases, medical intervention may be necessary. Lubricating eye drops the use of artificial tears or lubricating eye drops may help relieve symptoms of dryness and discomfort. Prescription eye drops: Inflammation and redness associated with pterygium can be managed with prescription eye drops, which contain steroids or Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). If the pterygium causes significant vision problems, persistent discomfort, or aesthetic concerns, surgical removal may be recommended. During the procedure, the pterygium is excised, and the surgeon may use a conjunctival graft or amniotic membrane to cover the area from which the pterygium was removed. This helps reduce the risk of recurrence. In some cases, low-dose radiation therapy may be considered to reduce the risk of pterygium recurrence after surgery.

While it may not be possible to completely prevent pterygium, certain measures can help reduce the risk of its development or recurrence. Wearing sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays can significantly reduce the risk of pterygium. A wide-brimmed hat can also provide additional protection from the sun. When engaging in outdoor activities in dry or dusty conditions, consider wearing protective eyewear, such as safety goggles or wrap-around sunglasses, to shield your eyes from environmental irritants. If you spend a lot of time in dry or windy environments, use lubricating eye drops to keep your eyes moist and reduce irritation. Take precautions to avoid exposing your eyes to irritants, such as smoke, chemicals, or pollutants, which can exacerbate pterygium symptoms.

Pterygium is a common eye condition that can cause discomfort and affect vision, particularly in individuals with prolonged sun exposure. While it may not be entirely preventable, taking preventive measures, such as wearing UV-protective eyewear and using lubricating eye drops, can help reduce the risk of pterygium.

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