

## Ocular Foreign Body

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If your first language is not English, we can arrange for an interpreter to be available. Please let us know in advance if you require this service.

### What is an Ocular Foreign Body?

An ocular foreign body is a common condition where a small particle, for example a piece of grit or a metal fragment, becomes stuck on your eye.

There are different parts of the eye where the foreign body can become stuck:

**Corneal Foreign Body** – where the object becomes stuck on the cornea (the clear front surface of the eye).

**Sub-Tarsal Foreign Body** – where the object is stuck under your eyelid, which in turn may cause small scratches to the surface of your cornea (the transparent dome of tissue that covers your iris and your pupil).

### What are the symptoms?

The surface of the eye contains many nerves, which makes it very sensitive to any scratch or foreign body on the front of the eye. The main symptoms are:

- A painful eye
- Red eye
- Watering of the eye
- Light sensitivity
- Blurred vision

### How is the foreign body removed from the eye?

The Ophthalmologist (Eye Doctor) will use local anaesthetic eye drops to numb the eye. Then, using a microscope, the foreign body will be removed with either a sterile cotton bud or a sterile needle. If there is a small 'rust ring' (for metal foreign bodies in the eye) the Ophthalmologist will again use local anaesthetic eye drops to remove the rust ring from the surface of the cornea.

Once the local anaesthetic eye drops have worn off (usually after 20 minutes to an hour) you may feel some pain or a sensation of something in the eye. The pain usually passes in a few days as your eye is healing, but you may find that the gritty sensation remains for a few weeks after the removal of the foreign body from the eye.

Anaesthetic drops cannot be prescribed to take home, as their regular use will slow down the healing of the eye. Instead pain relief such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen can be used to help to relieve the discomfort.

### What happens after the removal of the foreign body from the eye?

The Ophthalmologist may prescribe you antibiotic drops or ointment to help prevent infections from developing. Lubricants (artificial tears) are available on prescription or over the counter to help keep your eye comfortable while it heals.

If you normally wear contact lenses, you should NOT wear them until eye injury has completely healed. If you are on antibiotic eye drops, you should not start wearing your contact lenses again until at least 24 hours after finishing the treatment.

## Will I need a follow up appointment?

A follow-up appointment is not normally needed as, once the foreign body has been removed, the eye usually heals by itself. In cases where the foreign body has caused a bigger abrasion (scratch) to the eye surface, a follow-up appointment will be arranged as necessary.

## Caring for your eye at home

- Keep your eye closed as much as possible if there is discomfort.
- Do not rub your eye.
- You may need to wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from bright light.
- Always wear protective eye goggles/glasses if your job involves the risk of eye injury. This is especially important when working with high-speed tools.

## When to seek advice

In most cases, you will not need to return for a further check up. However, if your sight becomes more blurred over time, you see white patches getting bigger on the cornea, or if the pain and redness are getting a lot worse, please refer to 'What should I do if I have a problem?' below.

## What should I do if I have a problem?

**If you develop any of the symptoms featured in this leaflet or need urgent advice about your eye(s), you can contact our Triage telephone line on 0300 131 4500 extension 771744 (Mondays to Fridays between 09:00am and 5:00pm).**

**For Out of Hours contact you may leave an answerphone message on the telephone number above, and a member of staff will contact you the next working day. Otherwise, if you feel you need to be seen urgently, please either visit an optician or attend your local Accident and Emergency Department.**

## Consent

Although you consent for the treatment described in this leaflet, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please feel free to discuss this with your medical team.

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

Reviewed by: Paul Russell (Ophthalmology Staff Nurse)

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:  
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Ophthalmology Department, Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery division (DAS)

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