



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: CORNEAL ABRASION (SCRATCH ON THE EYE)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a corneal abrasion, a scrape wound to the front, clear part of the eye. Symptoms can include: pain, redness, tearing (watering), some blurring of vision, sensitivity to light, and foreign body sensation (a feeling like something is in the eye).

The cornea is sensitive; a tiny scrape can cause much discomfort. This discomfort cannot be treated with repeated doses of numbing drops; the drops would slow healing and make you unaware of any change or new injury to the eye. Instead, the discomfort is controlled with pain medication by mouth. Sometimes, relaxing the muscles of the eye with a drop that dilates the pupil is also used.

An abrasion of the cornea allows bacteria (germs) to get inside the outer corneal layer. Like a scrape of the skin, it can lead to infection. Therefore, the doctor or nurse puts an antibiotic ointment or drops in your eye.

Fortunately, the cornea heals fairly quickly. Symptoms should improve within 24 hours, and are most often gone within 48 hours.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR CORNEAL ABRASION:

- 1- Any eye problem is potentially serious. Your vision is too important to take chances! **IF THERE IS A CHANGE FOR THE WORSE, GO TO THE CLOSEST EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AT ONCE.** Specifically, seek care if: pain increases, vision decreases, or the appearance of the eye worsens.
- 2- Take over-the-counter pain medications for relief of discomfort. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), naproxen, or ibuprofen can be taken, depending on individual preference. If the provider prescribes pain medication, take it as directed, only if needed.
- 3- Rest your eyes as much as possible. Watching TV, reading, or any task requiring concentrated vision can be irritating.
- 4- If your eyes are sensitive to light, wear sunglasses and avoid bright daylight.
- 5- **IF YOU ARE NOT MARKEDLY IMPROVED WITHIN 24 HOURS, OR VIRTUALLY SYMPTOM-FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS: RETURN TO THE STUDENT HEALTH CENTER FOR A RE-CHECK OF THE EYE.**