

Keratitis

What Is Keratitis?

Infection or inflammation of the cornea (the centre portion of the eye that surrounds the pupil).

Causes

- Bacterial, viral or fungal infections. The most common is herpes simplex virus, Type I.
- Drying of the eye caused by an eyelid disorder or insufficient tear formation.
- Foreign object in the eye.
- Contact lenses over-use.
- Intense light, such as from welding arcs or the reflection of intense sunlight from snow or water. (Symptoms may not appear for 24 hours after exposure).
- Vitamin A deficiency.
- Allergy to eye cosmetics, air pollution, airborne particles (pollen, dust, mould, or yeast) and other allergens.

Signs and Symptoms

- Eye pain.
- Photophobia (sensitivity to light).
- Foreign body sensation.
- Tears.
- Blurred vision.

Factsheet

The Eyecare Trust is a registered charity that exists to promote awareness of all aspects of eye health. For more information call our public information line on 0845 129 5001 or log on to www.eyecaretrust.org.uk



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Risk Factors

Poor nutrition, especially insufficient vitamin A. Contact lens wearers. Illness that has lowered resistance. Crowded or unsanitary living conditions. Viral infections elsewhere in the body, especially cold sores or genital herpes.

Prevention

Wear protective glasses, if your work involves eye hazards. Eat a well-balanced diet that contains sufficient vitamin A or take multiple-vitamin supplements containing vitamin A.

Diagnosis and Treatment

General Measures Special eye exam confirms keratitis. A vision test may also be performed. Discontinue use of contact lenses until infection clears. Treatment usually involves eye medication. A temporary eye patch is often necessary. It may limit your ability to take care of yourself. Surgery to replace the cornea (severe cases only).

Medication

Antibiotic or anti-viral eye drops and ointments. Don't treat any eye inflammation without medical advice. Don't use non-prescription eye drops containing topical corticosteroids. These may worsen the condition or cause eyeball perforation.

Activity

Eye patching will restrict activity. Resume your normal activities gradually.

Diet

No special diet.

Possible Complications

- Glaucoma.
- Ulceration of the cornea.
- Permanent scarring in the eye.

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- Vision loss.

Prognosis

Depends on the cause. With early treatment, most types of keratitis are curable

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