

Pterygium Surgery



A pterygium (pronounced “ter-ij-ee-um”) is a growth of normal eye surface tissue that has undergone sun damage and progressively scars across the cornea, the transparent part of the front of the eye. If it becomes cosmetically unacceptable, causes excess irritation or it is affecting the vision then it should be surgically removed. It occurs from young adulthood into older life, and sometimes can even interfere with eye measurements prior to cataract surgery.

Treatment

The only known method of curing a pterygium is by surgery. The chance of recurrence after complete surgical removal, provided a graft is used, is about 5% over 5 years. The surgery takes about 30 minutes and is safe and comfortable. This is done usually under local anaesthetic with eyedrops to numb the eye first. After the pterygium is peeled off, the graft is taken from the white of the eye under the upper eyelid, and glued onto the white of the eye where the pterygium was removed from. The special fibrin glue is a human blood product that our theatre obtains commercially for the purpose.

After Your Surgery

Postoperatively the eye can be quite bloodshot for several weeks; and may be still quite pink at the area of the pterygium excision for a few months after surgery. We use eyedrops to help the eye heal - these are steroidal anti-inflammatory drops which are applied 4 times daily for 3-4 weeks.



After Your Surgery (cont)

Many of the symptoms for the healing period following the surgery are in common with eye operations generally. It is best not to swim, otherwise normal activities including showering, exercise and straining don't affect your healing. Rubbing the eyes should be avoided.

You can expect your eye to tire quickly and it is best not to do anything that requires excessive concentration for a week or so after surgery. It may be best to bring in help if you have young children to care for; and to take at least a week off work. Although the eye may be light sensitive for a fortnight and may feel gritty or prominent, the eye drops will provide temporary relief and things should rapidly improve thereafter.

These symptoms tend to be worse with prolonged near tasks such as computer work, but driving long distances may also make your eyes uncomfortable in the short term. Using sunglasses and wearing a hat with a brim will help and in fact will be good long term habits to reduce the risk of the pterygium recurring.

Results

Aside from these expected short-term issues, most people who have pterygium surgery are very pleased with the results and we hope you will be as well. Please discuss it further with our team and contact us if you have any questions.