

What is a corneal foreign body?

A corneal foreign body is a small object which has adhered (stuck) to the front surface of the eye (cornea). If the object is metal, there may be a small ring of rust around it.

What are the symptoms of a corneal foreign body?

- pain
- foreign body sensation
- blurred vision
- sensitivity to light
- tearing/watering
- redness.

What is the treatment of a corneal foreign body?

You will be given a drop of local anaesthetic to numb the eye before the foreign body is removed with a cotton swab or a sterile needle. Once the anaesthetic drop wears off (after about 30 minutes) you may have a persistent foreign body sensation until the eye heals.

- Antibiotic drops may be used 3-4 times a day for 4-5 days to prevent infection.
- Artificial tears/lubricants (available without a prescription) may be used to make the eye more comfortable.
- Additional pain relief:
 - oral paracetamol, paracetamol/codeine (Panadeine Forte[®])
 - ice packs
 - sunglasses when outdoors.

Please note that while an anaesthetic eye drop relieves immediate pain and allows the doctor to examine your eye and remove the foreign body, these drops cannot be used at home since they interfere with the natural healing of the cornea.

What are the possible complications of a corneal foreign body?

- infection
- blurred vision from scarring, especially if a foreign body is in the centre of the cornea.

Things to remember:

- most corneas heal within 4-5 days
- do not rub your eye after the injury
- do not touch your eye with cotton buds or tweezers
- do not wear contact lenses until the eye has fully healed
- seek medical attention if there is persistent discomfort, redness or decreased vision.

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