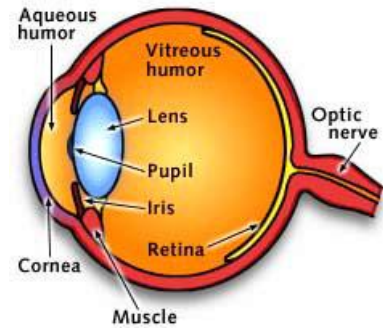


# Corneal Ulcer

## Introduction

- A corneal ulcer is an open sore in the cornea.
- The cornea is a clear structure in the front of the eye overlying the iris.
- Corneal ulcers are serious and may lead to blindness.
- A corneal ulcer appear as a greyish-white area in the normally transparent cornea.



## What causes a corneal ulcer?

- Infections caused by bacteria, viruses and even fungi due to improper care of contact lenses or overuse of steroid eye drops.
- Tiny cuts or scratches in the corneal surface due to minor trauma from physical objects such as wood, metal and glass.
- Excessively dry eyes caused by certain disorders.
- Inability to completely close an eye such as in Bell's palsy.
- Chemical burns or other caustic solution splashes.
- Immunological disorders such as SLE, rheumatoid arthritis and immunosuppressed states.



## What are the symptoms of a corneal ulcer?

- Eye pain, redness, tearing, pus or thick discharge and feeling of something in the eye.
- Blurring of vision.
- Increase in pain when looking at bright lights.
- Eyelids may be swollen.
- A greyish-white spot could be visible on the cornea.



## How is a corneal ulcer diagnosed?

- Eye examination using a special eye microscope called a slit lamp coupled with fluorescein dye staining to make the ulcers appear more visible.
- Scrapings of the ulcer will be sent to the lab to detect the type of bacteria, virus or fungi involved



in the infection.

### How is a corneal ulcer treated?

- Antibiotics and antivirals – eye drops and/or oral
- Steroids or immunosuppressive drugs if indicated
- Artificial teardrops
- Patching the affected eye
- Discontinuing contact lens
- Surgical debridement of the ulcer if medications are not effective
- Corneal transplantation if the ulcer threatens to perforate the cornea



### How long is the healing time?

- Most corneal ulcers should improve within 2 – 3 weeks after appropriate treatment.
- However, treatment may continue for longer to reduce the amount of potential scarring.

### How to prevent corneal ulcers?

- Eye protection gear should be worn when there may be a risk of exposure to small particles that can enter the eye.
- Artificial tear drops should be used for people with dry eyes or cannot completely close their eyes.



- Contact lens precaution:
  - Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
  - Never use saliva to lubricate contact lenses.
  - Remove contact lenses from the eyes every evening and carefully clean them.
  - Never use tap water to clean contact lenses.
  - Soak contact lenses in disinfecting solutions overnight.



- Never sleep with contact lenses not designed for overnight wear in the eyes.
- Remove contact lenses whenever the eyes are irritated or red.
- Regularly clean the contact lens case.
- Consider using daily disposable lenses.