

Eye Health: PTERYGIUM

A Pterygium (pronounced TER-RIG-E-YUM) is an elevated, wing-like, fleshy, triangular growth that develops on the white of the eye (sclera) and can invade the cornea (the clear front covering of the eye). Pterygium is usually a harmless condition and is a benign (non-cancerous) growth. If it grows across the cornea, it may cause discomfort and blurry vision.

CAUSES

It is usually caused by regular exposure to bright sunlight/UV rays. Although UV radiation appears to be the primary cause for the development and growth of a pterygium, dust, wind and dry eye disease are sometimes contributing factors.

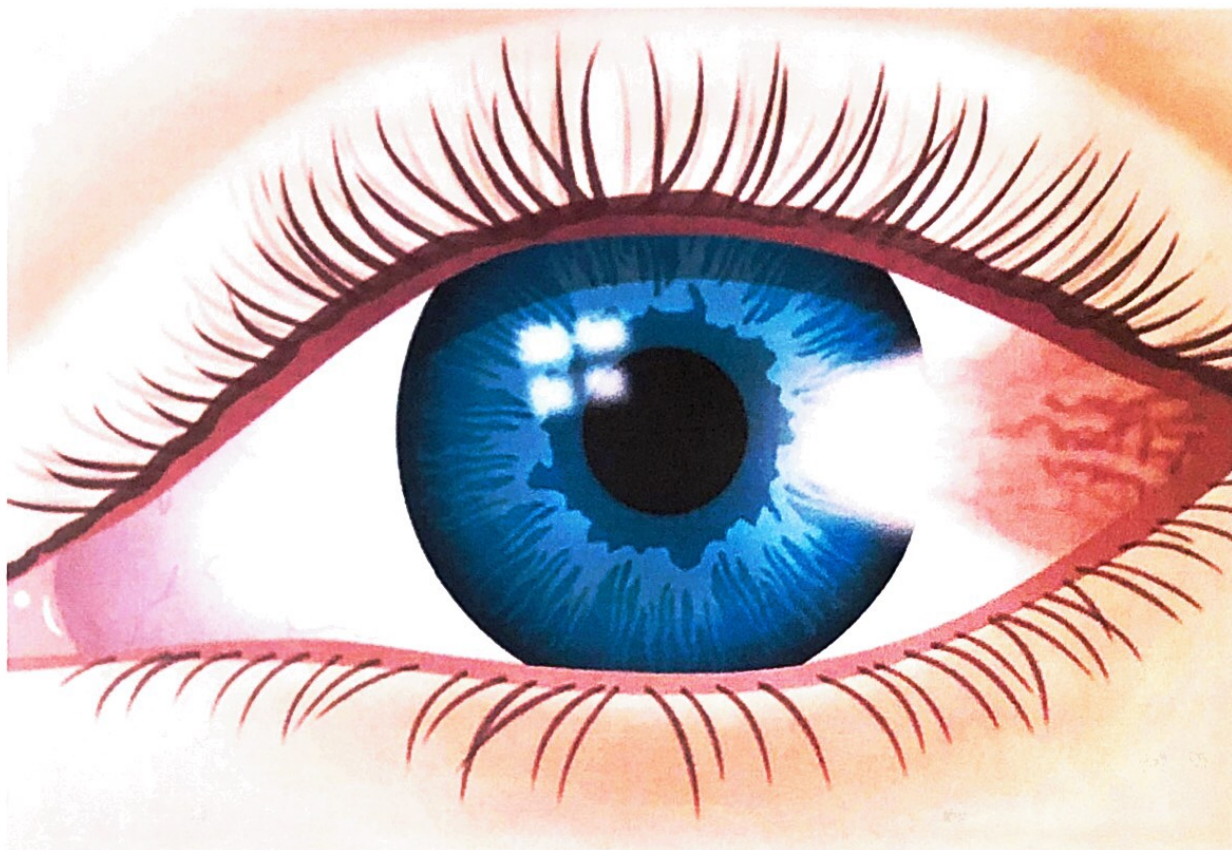
Pterygium usually develops in persons aged 30 – 50 years and are rarely seen in children.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

A Pterygium usually occurs on the side of the eye closer to the nose, but it can also develop on the side closer to the ear and can affect one or both eyes.

Many people with mild pterygium may not experience symptoms or require treatment. Large or growing pterygia however can often cause:

- Irritation or gritty sensation
- Itching
- Burning



which can lead to vision loss. In many cases, if the pterygium is small, eye drops can be used to help lubricate and soothe the eye and treat symptoms, such as itching and irritation in the eye. Eyedrops, however, do not remove the growth. If the pterygium becomes a matter of concern, then consult your ophthalmologist to discuss surgical removal.

PREVENTION

Since prolonged exposure to sunlight/UV light is the suspected cause, sunglasses with UV protection and even hats can help. It is important to visit your eye doctor to learn how to treat your specific condition. For more information on caring for your eyes, you can visit Trinidad Eye Hospital's website at trinidadeyehospital.org

Article by Dr Ronnie Bhola

- Foreign-body sensations (the feeling something is "in" the eye)
- Redness
- Visual disturbances
- Corneal scarring

TREATMENT

Treatment generally depends on the size of the pterygium, whether it is growing and the symptoms it causes. Regardless of the severity, it should be monitored to prevent scarring

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