

Pterygium Surgery

What is a pterygium?

The cornea is the clear window of the eye that covers the iris and the pupil. A pterygium is a wing-shaped overgrowth of scar-like tissue that extends onto the cornea. This causes distortion of vision and eye irritation. Progressive growth can cause serious visual loss. When a pterygium grows large enough to cause significant eye irritation or problems with vision, it needs to be removed by surgery.

How did I get this type of growth?

A pterygium may be caused by your eyes being exposed to:

- wind
- dust
- some types of chemicals
- ultraviolet (UV) sun rays-

A pterygium may be prevented by:

- wearing sunglasses that block UV rays
- wearing safety glasses around harsh chemicals
- using eyedrops to treat dry eyes

How is the surgery done?

This procedure is done under local anaesthetic. Local anaesthetic will numb the eye so that you will not feel anything. The surgery takes about ½ hour. The anaesthetist will also give you medication to relax you during the surgery as needed.

The pterygium is dissected from the eye with an operating microscope. During surgery, the additional steps on the next page may be taken by your surgeon to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Your surgeon may do the following to reduce the risk of recurrence:

- An anti-cancer medication called mitomycin C may be applied to the excision site during surgery, usually for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Healthy tissue from the surface of your eye may be transferred to the site and secured in place with special tissue glue and a few stitches. This is known as a conjunctival graft.
- Amnionic Membrane Transplantation is a technique using tissue derived from human placentas. The tissue has anti-inflammatory and healing properties and may be used when extensive surgical reconstruction is needed.

What are the risks and benefits of this surgery?

Your doctor will explain the risks and benefits before you sign the consent form. Make sure you have your questions answered before signing the consent.

What happens after surgery?

You will go to the Day Surgery Unit and the nurse will go over your care at home.

The area around the eye will be numb from the local anaesthetic for 8 to 12 hours. After you may have pain or discomfort under the patch. Use the oral pain control medication prescribed by your surgeon if needed.

What activities can I do after surgery?

You may read or watch TV but you may find your vision blurry at first. You may go for walks but avoid strenuous exercise for 1 week after surgery. Slowly resume your regular activities

DO NOT go swimming or get water directly into the eye for 2 weeks.

DO NOT rub or bump the eye.

DO NOT enter a dirty, dusty, or smoky area for at least 2 weeks.

How do I care for my eye?

Keep the eye patch on until the next day, when you see your surgeon. You may need to use eye drops after surgery. Your surgeon will tell you when and how often to use them.

Wear your glasses or sunglasses during the day to protect your eye. Wear the eye shield at night for the first week after surgery.

If you have problems

Expect some degree of pain, redness and blurring of vision.

If the pain in your eye becomes severe, or your vision suddenly worsens, call your surgeon.

If you cannot contact your surgeon, go to the Emergency Department of St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton (either Charlton Street downtown site, or the Urgent Care Centre in Stoney Creek).

