Foreign bodies on the eye and corneal abrasions

Emergency Department

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Where can I get more information?
Call 111 when you need medical help fast, but it’s not an emergency.

Or visit:
www.nhs.uk/symptomcheckers

UCLH cannot accept responsibility for information provided by external organisations.

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this document, please contact us on 020 3447 0083. We will try our best to meet your needs.
Foreign bodies in the eye and corneal abrasions
The doctor or nurse has removed a piece of foreign material (for example metal or wood) from the front of your eye. Although most of these injuries heal completely, there are several things you should bear in mind:

• Although the eye may be comfortable on your leaving the hospital, it may become uncomfortable again about 30 minutes later, when the anaesthetic (numbing) drops wear off. Please use the treatment prescribed for you.

• Normally, the eye should heal up and become comfortable again in about 24 hours. It is not generally necessary to see you again, but you should return after this time if the eye seems to be getting increasingly red or sore, or the vision more blurred.

• When necessary, protect your eyes with some form of goggles. This is essential when hammering or grinding etc.

Corneal abrasions
What is a corneal abrasion?
A corneal abrasion results when a tiny piece of skin is scratched off the front of the eye (the cornea). This causes intense pain with a feeling that something is in your eye.

How can it be treated?
Unfortunately, we just have to wait for the scratch to heal over with new skin. This normally takes 24 hours but in the case of very large abrasions, it can take longer.

We can make the eye more comfortable while it is healing by putting some cream and a pad on it, although this means you will not be able to drive.

When do I need to be seen again?
Normally, a simple corneal abrasion does not need to be seen again. If we feel it is necessary, we may recommend a follow-up appointment.

Moorfields Eye Hospital has a specialist ophthalmic accident and emergency department, which is open 24 hours a day for emergency eye problems. The hospital is situated on City Rd, near Old Street Underground station (follow signs from the station).

If you are concerned, you can ring Moorfields Direct, their nurse-led telephone helpline, on 020 7566 2345. This service is available from 9am–4.30pm, Monday to Friday.