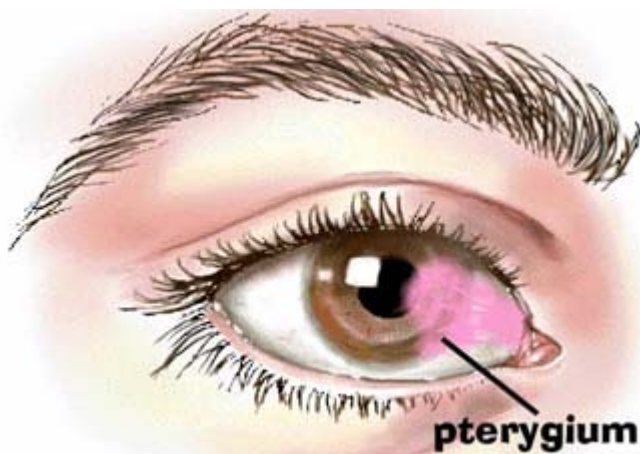


Pterygium



A pterygium is a pinkish, triangular-shaped tissue growth on the cornea. Some pterygia grow slowly throughout a person's life, while others stop growing after a certain point. A pterygium rarely grows so large that it begins to cover the pupil of the eye.

Symptoms

Pterygium usually has no symptoms, and many do not require treatment. However, some pterygium become red and inflamed from time to time. Large or thick pterygium may be more irritating than painful. Occasionally, large pterygium will begin to change the shape of the cornea and cause vision changes (astigmatism).

Treatment

Pterygia are more common in sunny climates and in the 20-40 age group. Scientists do not know what causes pterygia to develop. However, since people who have pterygia usually have spent a significant time outdoors, many doctors believe ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun may be a factor. In areas where sunlight is strong, wearing protective eyeglasses, sunglasses, and/or hats with brims is suggested. While some studies report a higher prevalence of pterygia in men than in women, this may reflect different rates of exposure to UV light.

Because a pterygium is visible, many people want to have it removed for cosmetic reasons. It is usually not too noticeable unless it becomes red and swollen from dust or air pollutants. Surgery to remove a pterygium is not recommended unless it affects vision. If a pterygium is surgically removed, it may grow back, particularly if the patient is less than 40 years of age. Lubricants can reduce the redness and provide relief from the chronic irritation.

Surgical risks include the following:

- Loss of eye
 - Infection
 - Bleeding inside or behind the eye
 - Increased eye pressure
 - Less attractive eye
 - Need for additional treatment and/or surgery