

Eye Injuries

- Black Eye
- Corneal Abrasion (scratch on the eye)
- Foreign Object in the Eye

Black Eye

What is it?

Bruising caused by bleeding in the tiny blood vessels in the skin surrounding the eye.

Plan of Action:

- **Apply a cold compress soon after the injury.** Using gentle pressure, place a cold pack, a cloth filled with ice — or even a bag of frozen vegetables — to the area around your eye. Take care not to press on the eye itself. Apply cold as soon as possible after the injury to reduce swelling. Repeat several times a day for a day or two.
- **Look for blood.** If you see blood in the white or colored parts of the eye, seek urgent care by an eye specialist (ophthalmologist).
- **Seek medical care right away** if you have vision problems, such as double vision or blurring. Also seek care right away if you have severe pain, bruising around both eyes, or bleeding in an eye or from the nose.
- **Apply warm or hot compresses.** This may be helpful after a few days when the swelling has gone down. Repeat several times a day for a day or two.

Most injuries that cause a black eye aren't serious. But a black eye could be a sign of a more serious injury, such as an internal injury to the eye or a fracture of the thin bones around the eye. You may have a skull fracture if you have double vision, bruising around both eyes (raccoon eyes) or bleeding from the nose.

Corneal Abrasion (scratch on the eye)

What is it?

A superficial scratch on the clear, protective "window" at the front of the eye (cornea).

The cornea can be scratched by contact with dust, dirt, sand, wood shavings, plant matter, metal particles, contact lenses or even the edge of a piece of paper.

Symptoms:

- Pain
- Blurry vision
- A gritty feeling in the eye
- Tearing
- Redness
- Sensitivity to the light (photophobia)
- Headache

Plan of Action:

In case of a corneal abrasion, seek prompt medical attention. Left untreated, the abrasion could become infected and result in a sore known as a corneal ulcer.

In the meantime, take these immediate steps:

- **Rinse your eye with clean water or a saline solution.** You can use an eyecup or a small, clean drinking glass positioned with its rim resting on the bone at the base of your eye socket. If you have quick access to a work site eye-rinse station, use it. Rinsing the eye may wash out a foreign object.
- **Blink several times.** This may remove small particles.
- **Pull the upper eyelid over the lower eyelid.** This may cause your eye to tear, which may help wash out the particle. Or it may cause the lashes of your lower eyelid to brush away an object from under your upper eyelid.

Use the following pointers to avoid making the injury worse:

- Don't try to remove an object that is embedded in your eye or makes your eye difficult to close.
- Don't rub your eye after an injury.
- Don't touch your eye with cotton swabs, tweezers or other instruments.
- If you use contact lenses, don't wear them while your eye is healing.

Most corneal abrasions heal in a few days but should be treated with antibiotic drops or ointment to reduce the risk of

infection.

Foreign Object in the Eye

What is it?

Anything that is in the eye that wouldn't normally be there.

Plan of Action:

To help yourself:

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Try to flush the object out of your eye with a gentle stream of clean, warm water. Use an eyecup or a small, clean drinking glass positioned with its rim resting on the bone at the base of your eye socket.
- Another way to flush a foreign object from your eye is to get into a shower and aim a gentle stream of lukewarm water on your forehead over the affected eye while holding your eyelid open.
- If you're wearing contact lenses, it's best to remove the lens before or while you're irrigating the surface of the eye with water. Sometimes a foreign body can be stuck to the undersurface of the lens.

To help someone else:

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Seat the person in a well-lighted area.

- Gently examine the eye to find the object. Pull the lower lid down and ask the person to look up. Then hold the upper lid while the person looks down.
- If the object is floating in the tear film on the surface of the eye, try using a medicine dropper filled with clean, warm water to flush it out. Or tilt the head back and irrigate the surface of the eye with clean water from a drinking glass or a gentle stream of tap water.

Caution:

- Don't try to remove an object that's embedded in the eye.
- Don't rub the eye.
- Don't try to remove a large object that appears to be embedded in the eye or is sticking out between the lids.

When to seek emergency care:

- You can't remove the object with simple irrigation
- The object is embedded in the eye
- The person with the object in the eye is experiencing abnormal vision
- Pain, redness or the sensation of an object in the eye persists more than 24 hours after the object is removed

Keep in mind that sometimes an object can scratch your eye. This often feels as though the object is still in the eye even after the object has been removed. This sensation can sometimes take 24 hours to go away.