

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.

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