

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.

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