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Corneal Abrasions And Recurrent Erosions

One of the most common injuries of the eye is an abrasion. In this condition the surface of the eye (epithelium) is usually removed by accident, by being scratched with a fingernail or tree branch for example. Abrasions are very painful. They also cause excessive tearing, redness blurred vision and foreign body sensation.

Abrasions usually heal in a short period of time. Treatment consists of a drop which is used to open the pupil and relax the muscles in the eye that may get inflamed. Often an antibiotic is instilled into the eye because an abrasion may invite infection. A tight eye patch will keep the lids from moving and pain relievers are recommended for comfort. Sometimes patching is not recommended. Abrasions covering small areas heal rapidly; those covering more than a third of the cornea may take a day or two to completely heal. It may, however, take several weeks for all the blurriness to resolve.

It is important to NOT rub the eyes during the healing phase. The new cells have poor connections to the underlying tissue and can easily be rubbed off. When this occurs, the pain returns and re-patching is necessary.

Occasionally, long after an abrasion has healed the cells fall out spontaneously, often upon awakening in the morning. This is called recurrent erosion and represents an area of epithelium that is not “glued” down well to the deepest parts of the cornea.

TREATMENT is similar to that for abrasions. Bedtime ointments and other forms of lubrications are also helpful in preventing this troublesome complication.