

WHAT IS A PTERYGIUM?

A pterygium is a triangular thickening of the conjunctiva (outer coating of the eye) that grows onto the cornea (the clear front window of the eyeball). It may grow large enough to interfere with vision and frequently causes redness, irritation, and tearing, especially with fatigue and in dry, dusty or windy environments.

WHAT CAUSES PTERYGIUM?

The exact cause is not well understood. Long-term exposure to sunlight, especially ultraviolet (UV) rays, and chronic eye irritation from dry, dusty conditions seem to play an important role. Hence, Pterygium occurs more often in people who spend a great deal of time outdoors, especially in sunny and dusty climates. A dry eye may contribute to pterygium as well.

HOW IS PTERYGIUM TREATED?

When a pterygium becomes red and irritated, eye drops or ointments may be used to soothe the inflammation. If these treatments fail, or the pterygium grows large enough to threaten sight it can be removed surgically. Modern surgical techniques for pterygium have reduced the likelihood of re-growth after surgery from 50% with older techniques to less than 1%.