BUNBURY & BUSSELTON EYE SPECIALISTS

PATIENT INFO AND ADVICE

What are Pterygium and Pinguecula?

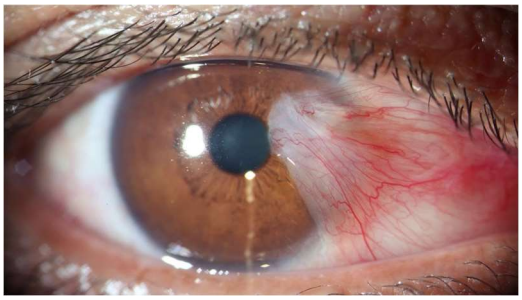
Pterygium (pronounced tur-IJ-ee-um) and pinguecula (pronounced pin-GWEK-yoo-la) are growths on the cornea (the clear front window of the eye) and the conjunctiva — the thin, filmy membrane that covers the white part of your eye (sclera).

Both types of growths are believed to be caused by dry eye and environmental elements such as wind, dust, and ultraviolet (UV) light.

What is the difference between a pterygium and a pinguecula?

A pinguecula is a yellowish patch or bump on the conjunctiva, most often on the side closest to the nose. It is a change in the normal tissue that results in a deposit of protein, fat and/or calcium. It is similar to a callus on the skin.

A pterygium is a growth of fleshy tissue, often arising from pingucula, on the conjunctiva that extends over the cornea. This growth may remain small or grow large enough to interfere with vision.



What are the symptoms of pterygium and a pinguecula?

Symptoms of both pterygium and pinguecula can range from mild to severe and may include:

- Redness, inflammation or both, especially during the growth of a pterygium;
- Blurred vision, Irritiation, Dryness, Itching, Burning, Gritty feeling, foreign body sensation.

How are pterygium and pinguecula treated?

In many cases, no treatment is needed. When a pterygium or pinguecula becomes red and irritated, eyedrops or ointments may be used to help reduce inflammation.

If the growths become large enough to threaten sight or cause persistent discomfort, they can be removed surgically. They are also sometimes removed for cosmetic reasons.

Surgery

Surgery takes 45 minutes and is performed under local or general anaesthetic. Full recovery can take up to six weeks although you can return to work in one to two weeks. You will need to take two lots of drops four times a day for two weeks reducing to one of drops twice a day for the following two weeks. You will need to be reviewed six weeks after the date of your surgery.

Other treatment

Despite proper surgical removal, pterygium or pinguecula may return. Surface radiation or medications are sometimes used to help prevent recurrences. However, the best way to avoid recurrences is to limit exposure to the environmental factors that contribute to their growth.

This includes:

- Adequately protecting your eyes from excessive UV light with proper sunglasses;
- Protecting your eyes in dry, dusty conditions with proper eyewear;
- Applying artificial tears to your eyes in dry conditions.

Bunbury: 19 George St, Bunbury WA 6230
Busselton: 194 Bussell Hwy, Busselton WA 6280
Dr Neil Sinclair
Dr Russell Townsend
Dr Alasdair Jackson
Tel: (08) 9791 4111 Fax: (08) 9791 4199
Email: admin@bandbeyespecialists.com.au
Website: www.bandbeyespecialists.com.au

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