

WHAT IS A PTERYGIUM?

Pterygium (pronounced tur-ij-ee-um) is a growth 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).

WHAT ARE TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES?

In many cases no treatment is needed. Sometimes eyedrops and ointments may be used to reduce inflammation (swelling). If the growth threatens sight or causes persistent discomfort, it can be removed. You should understand that despite proper removal, the pterygium may return.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PTERYGIUM EXCISION?

All operations and procedures have risks and can result in unsuccessful results, complications, and injury from both known and unknown causes. Complications that may occur days, weeks, or even months later include: poor vision; loss of corneal clarity; infection; double vision and injury to parts of the eye and nearby structures from the procedure or anesthesia. The pterygium may grow back. You may not be happy with the cosmetic result. You may need additional treatment or surgery to treat these complications. Recovery time is about two weeks during which the eye can be quite sore. Blindness, while extremely rare, is a possible complication of any eye surgery.

WHAT IS MITOMYCIN-C?

Mitomycin-C (MMC) may be used during excision (removal) to minimize the recurrence of pterygium. MMC was first used as anti-cancer drug. Ophthalmologists use MMC for other purposes “off-label” as part of the practice of medicine. The decision to use MMC is based on the evaluation of the advantages and potential disadvantages in each individual case.

WHAT IS CONJUNCTIVAL TRANSPLANTATION?

Conjunctival transplantation moves a piece of your own conjunctiva (filmy white part of the eye) to the area where the pterygium is excised (removed). This technique may be used for the management of both primary and recurrent pterygium.