

# Pterygium

## What is Pterygium?

Pterygium is the growth of a white or skin-coloured tissue over the cornea, the surface of the eye. It commonly grows out from the inner corner of the eye towards the centre. Though it can look similar to a tumour on the cornea, pterygium is not a cancer.

## What Causes Pterygium?

The exact cause of pterygium is unknown, but it is associated with excessive exposure to wind, UV rays in sunlight and irritants in the environment like dirt or sand. Because of this, it is more likely to occur in populations that live near the equator, or windy locations. Working in a dry, dirty and dusty environment may also contribute to pterygium. Additionally, it is twice more likely to occur in men than women. Some research also suggests that pterygium

## How Will It Affect My Eyesight?

If you have a pterygium, you may find that your eye is:

- Red and sore
- Dry and irritated
- Itchy, with a sensation of dirt, grit or sand

In advanced cases, the pterygium can affect vision by growing over the pupil, blocking light from entering the eye. It also has the potential to produce astigmatism or to scar the cornea.

## How Is Pterygium Treated?

As it is a benign growth, in its early stages treatment is focused on relieving symptoms rather than removing the pterygium. Artificial tears can be used to moisten the eye, protecting it from irritation and relieving discomfort. If the pterygium is very inflamed, steroid eye drops may be used to reduce the inflammation.

## Pterygium surgery

In more advanced stages of pterygium where it presents with severe symptoms or grows to cover the pupil and block vision, surgery is recommended to remove it.

This involves a minor procedure with a risk of less than a 1 in 5,000 chance of experiencing visual problems after surgery. Occasional bleeding or a mild infection may occur, but this is rare. It is done under local anaesthesia on an outpatient basis and you will be able to return home within the same day of treatment.

During surgery, the pterygium is removed from the cornea. The bare area is then covered with a normal piece of the conjunctiva, the skin from the eye's white surface underneath the eyelid. This is similar to a skin graft. Medical grade glue is recommended to mend the wound as it reduces irritation, inflammation and the chance of the growth recurring after surgery.

After your operation, you will be given eyedrops to be used approximately four times a day. You may feel that your eye is scratchy. This is because the surface of the eye is uneven. The feeling should go away after one to two weeks.

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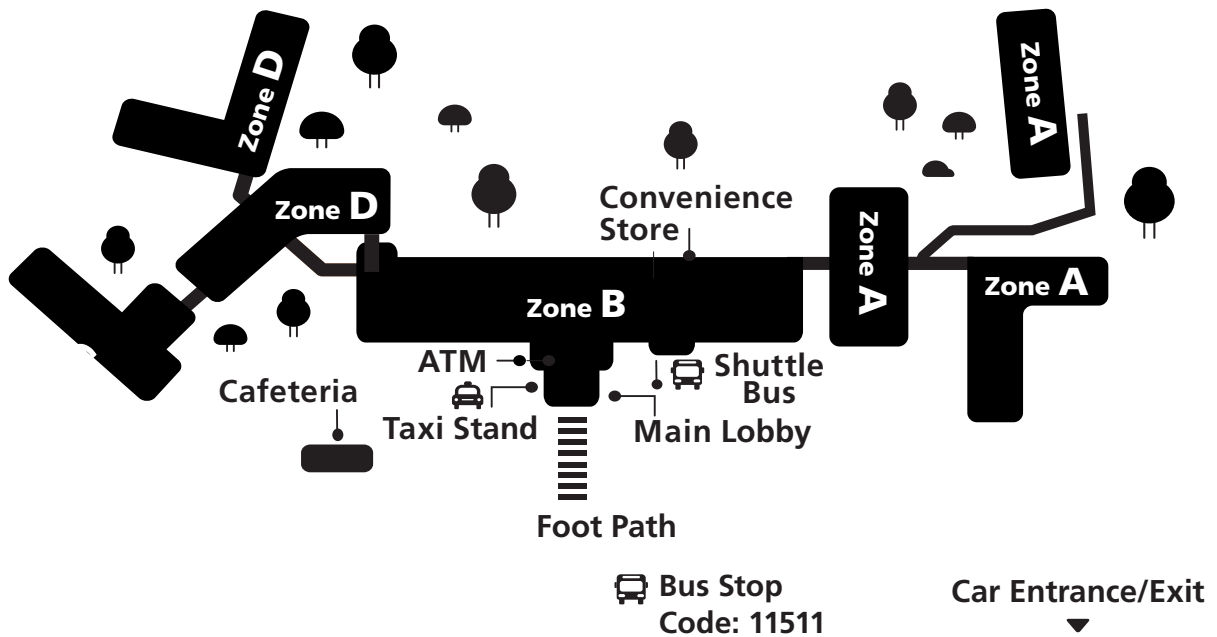
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