Eye Foreign Body Treatment

Self-Care at Home

You should be able to care for minor debris in your eye at home. If you have trouble removing something in your eye or if a larger or sharper object is involved, you should seek medical attention. If you are wearing a contact lens, it should be removed prior to trying to remove the foreign body. Do not put the contact lens back into your eye until your eye is completely healed.

- For minor foreign bodies, such as an eyelash, home care should be adequate.
  - Begin by rinsing your eye with a saline solution (the same solution used to rinse contact lenses). Tap water or distilled water may be used if no saline solution is available. Water will effectively flush out your eye, but the chlorine in most tap water can cause varying levels of irritation. How you wash out your eye is less important than getting it washed out with great amounts of water.
    - A water fountain makes a great eye wash. Just lean over the fountain, turn on the water, and keep your eye open.
    - At a sink, stand over the sink, cup your hands, and put your face into the running water.
    - Hold a glass of water to your eye and tip your head back. Do this many times.
    - If you are near a shower, get in and put your eye under the running water.
    - If you are working outside, a garden hose running at a very modest flow will work.
  - If washing out your eye is not successful, the object can usually be removed with the tip of a tissue or a cotton swab.
    - Pull back the eyelid by pulling down on the bottom edge of the lower lid or by pulling up on the upper edge of the upper lid.
    - Look up when evaluating for a foreign body under the lower lid.
Look down when evaluating for a foreign body under the upper lid. You will often need someone to help you in this case.

Be very careful not to scrape the tissue or the cotton swab across your cornea, the clear dome over the iris.

- For larger foreign bodies or metal pieces, you should seek medical care, even if you are able to safely remove them at home.
  - If the foreign body is easily accessible and has not penetrated your eyeball, you may be able to remove it carefully with a cotton swab or a tissue.
  - If you have any question about penetration of the eye, do not remove the object without medical assistance.
  - If you cannot remove the object or if you continue to have the sensation that something is in your eye even after the debris is removed, you should seek medical care.

- After the foreign body is removed, your eye may be red and tearing.

- You may protect your eye by cutting the top part off of a Styrofoam or paper cup and placing the cup over your eye. If you place a cup over your eye, do not put any pressure on the injured eye, because it could cause additional injury to your eye.
  - This cup can be taped in place and will form a cover over your eye.
  - It is very important not to rub your eye or to apply any pressure to your eye. If you have punched a hole in your eye (called a ruptured globe or eyeball), you can do significant damage by pressing or rubbing your eye. This is especially true with small children who will rub their eyes to try to remove the debris.

**Medical Treatment**

- For scratches on your cornea (called corneal abrasions), the usual treatment is an antibiotic ointment and/or antibiotic eyedrops and pain medicine. If the abrasion is large (greater than 50% of the corneal surface), then it may also be treated with a patch.

- Any noted damage to the iris, the lens, or the retina requires immediate evaluation by an ophthalmologist and may or may not require surgery.

- A ruptured eyeball requires surgery by an ophthalmologist.

- If no other injury is noted, hyphema (blood in between the cornea and the iris) requires close follow-up care with an ophthalmologist.

**more information from eMedicineHealth**

- When to Seek Medical Care
- Exams and Tests
- Next Steps
- Prevention
- Outlook