

# Central Corneal Ulcer

This material will help you understand central corneal ulcers, their causes, and how they may be treated.

## What is a central corneal ulcer?

A corneal ulcer is an infection within the cornea. The cornea is the clear window in the front of the eye (see picture to right). Corneal ulcers are usually visible as white or gray spots over the iris (the colored part of the eye), but sometime are too small to notice.

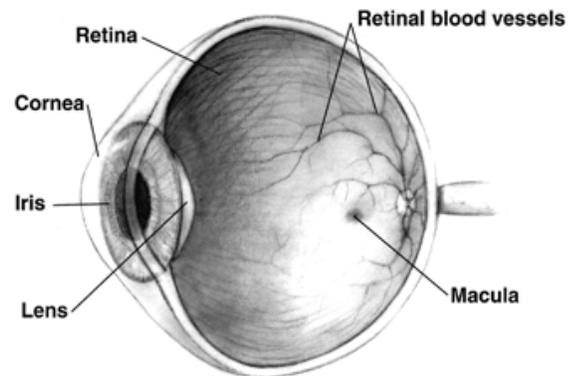


Image used with permission.  
Copyright © VHI 1-800-356-0709

Central corneal ulcers tend to be deep in the cornea and take longer to heal. They may also lead to scarring or holes in the cornea, which can cause vision loss.

Common symptoms include:

- Severe eye pain with or without sensitivity to light
- Redness
- Tearing or discharge from eye
- Blurred vision

## What causes a central corneal ulcer?

Central corneal ulcers often occur after some kind of corneal trauma, like a scratch or cut on the surface of the eye. Once the cornea is scratched, it is open

to bacteria. These bacteria can cause an infection, leading to a corneal ulcer. Central corneal ulcers may also be caused by dry eye. Your eye's tears help to keep the surface of the eye moist and also protect it from invading germs and bacteria. When your eye is dry, it is more likely to become infected. Wearing contact lenses can make your eyes dry and increase your risk of developing a corneal ulcer. Conditions that cause the cornea surface to lose feeling (such as neurotrophic keratopathy) may also lead to corneal ulcers.

### **How is a central corneal ulcer treated?**

Treatment of corneal ulcers usually depends on the cause. Your doctor will likely prescribe antibiotic eye drops to heal the infection. In addition, oral pain medications may be prescribed to help ease pain.

It is important to follow up with your eye doctor regularly as your ulcer heals. This could take a few weeks to several months. If the ulcer heals with a large scar, you may need other treatments or surgery to improve your vision. A corneal transplant, in which your damaged cornea is replaced with a healthy donor cornea, may help restore vision.

You and your doctor will discuss the treatment that is best for you.

To prevent future corneal ulcers, it is important that you wear protective eye gear, such as goggles or glasses, if there is any chance of an eye injury. Such eyewear can be worn when you are doing yard work, construction work, or playing sports. It is also important to take proper care of your contact lenses if you wear them.

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/corneal-ulcer.cfm>



<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1196936-clinical>

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Kathleen Koviak, MPH Candidate  
Reviewers: Christopher Hood, MD and Gale Oren, MILS

Unless otherwise noted, Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Last Revised 03/2015