

CORNEAL ULCER

A corneal ulcer is a wound in the surface of the eye. The damage would be similar to a scrape or cut on your skin; both problems result in an unprotected wound. The normal cornea is covered by a protective layer of tissue called the epithelium. When the epithelium is damaged, infections can occur and result in complete perforation of the eye if left untreated. Clinical signs of a corneal ulcer include squinting, redness, cloudiness, tearing, pawing/rubbing at the eye and lethargy. A special green stain can be used to highlight the ulcer on the cornea. There are many causes of corneal ulcers such as injuries, abnormal eyelashes that irritate the ocular surface, lack of tear production, and infections.

Treatment of the ulcer depends on the type and depth of ulcer. Some corneal ulcers require topical and or systemic medications to prevent infection and alleviate pain, whereas very deep corneal ulcers require surgically placed grafts to prevent a full thickness perforation. Indolent ulcers (corneal erosions) are superficial and recurrent ulcers that tend to heal very slowly unless special techniques are performed, such as a minor surgical procedure called multiple punctate keratotomy (MPK) or the placement of a collagen shield. Antibiotics are usually dispensed to prevent infections. Healing ulcers should exhibit the presence of red blood vessels. This is a good sign! Please call if you have any questions.