



# Pinguecula and Pterygium

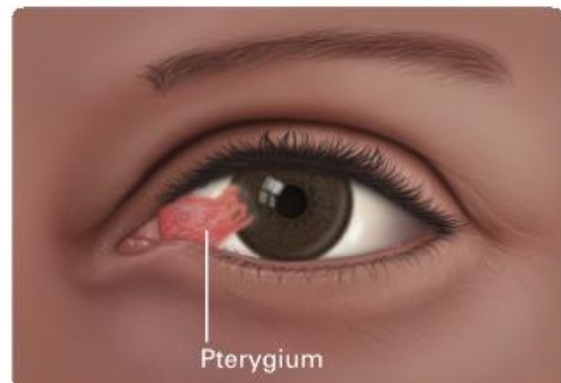
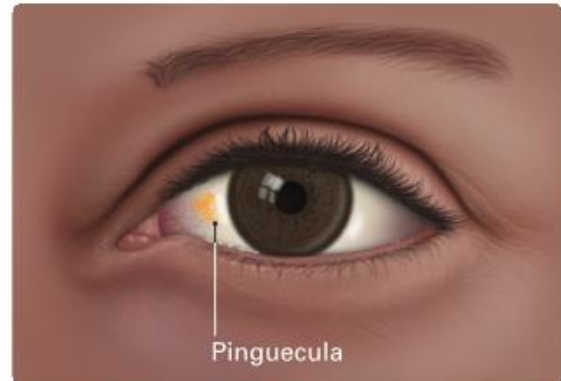
## What are pinguecula and pterygium?

Pinguecula and pterygium are growths on your eye's conjunctiva, the clear covering over the white part of the eye.

**Pinguecula** is a growth that looks like a yellow spot or bump on the conjunctiva. It often appears on the side of the eye near your nose. A pinguecula is a deposit of protein, fat, or calcium.

**Pterygium** is a growth of fleshy tissue that may start as a pinguecula. It can remain small or grow large enough to cover part of the cornea. When this happens, it can affect your vision.

Both pinguecula and pterygium are believed to be caused by having dry eyes. These growths may also be caused by exposure to wind, dust, and ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun.



### Eye Words to Know

**Conjunctiva:** Clear tissue covering the white part of your eye and the inside of your eyelids.

**Cornea:** Clear, dome-shaped window of the front of your eye. It focuses light into your eye.

**Sclera:** The outer layer of the eye. This is the "white" of the eye.

### Avoiding pinguecula and pterygium

If you have had a pinguecula or a pterygium at least once before, try to avoid the things that cause these growths. Here are some ways:

- wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from ultraviolet (UV) light
- protect your eyes from dust by wearing glasses or goggles
- use artificial tears when your eyes are very dry

## What are pinguecula and pterygium symptoms?

Symptoms of pinguecula and pterygium can range from mild to severe. They include:

- redness and swelling of the conjunctiva, mostly while the pterygium grows
- a yellow spot or bump on the white of your eye
- dry, itchy, burning eyes. Or feeling like sand or grit is stuck in your eye
- blurry vision

## How are pinguecula and pterygium treated?

In many cases pinguecula and pterygium do not need to be treated. However, if your eyes are uncomfortable or your vision is affected, you may need treatment.

## Pinguecula treatment

Drops to lubricate your eyes can help relieve dry eye irritation from pinguecula. They also help relieve that annoying feeling as if you have something in your eye. If pinguecula causes redness and swelling in your eye, your doctor may prescribe steroid eye drops.

When a pinguecula affects your vision or its appearance bothers you, you may need surgery.

## Pterygium treatment

Your ophthalmologist can treat the discomfort, redness or swelling from a pterygium with lubricating or steroid eye drops.

If a pterygium grows large enough to cause problems, your ophthalmologist will probably recommend surgery to remove it. Once the pterygium is removed, your surgeon may transplant a thin piece of normal tissue onto the affected area. This technique helps reduce the chance that your pterygium will grow back.

The best way to keep pinguecula and pterygium from coming back is to avoid dryness, sunlight and dust.

## Summary

Pinguecula and pterygia are growths on the white of your eye. Pinguecula is a yellow spot or bump on the conjunctiva, often on the side of the eye near your nose. A pterygium is a fleshy growth that may start as a pinguecula. It can grow large enough to cover part of the cornea. Both are believed to be caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun.

Treatment for pinguecula and pterygium may include lubricating eye drops or steroid eye drops. If a pterygium grows large enough to cause problems, surgery will be recommended to remove it.

The best way to keep pinguecula and pterygium from coming back is to avoid dryness, sunlight and dust.



# Pinguecula and Pterygium

Get more information about pinguecula and pterygium from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at [aao.org/surfers-eye-link](http://aao.org/surfers-eye-link).

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