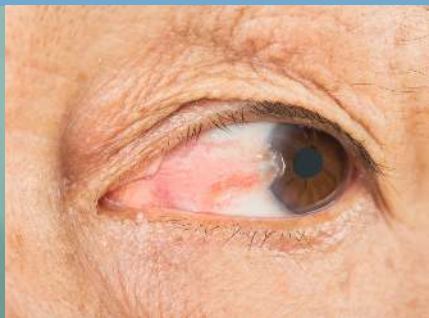




Dr Geoffrey Ryan

# Pterygium Surgery



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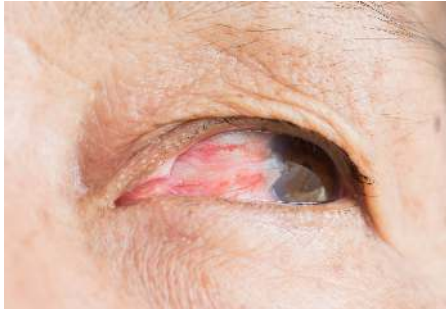
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## What is a Pterygium?

A Pterygium is a benign abnormal growth of conjunctival tissue overlying the cornea. The cause is from exposure to UV light which explains the high incidence in Queensland.



**A pterygium extending from the nasal conjunctiva onto the cornea.**

## When is surgery indicated?

A Pterygium requires surgical excision if there is any risk of the tissue encroaching on the visual axis. Additional surgical indications include recurrent pain, irritation or redness that does not settle with lubricant eyedrops.

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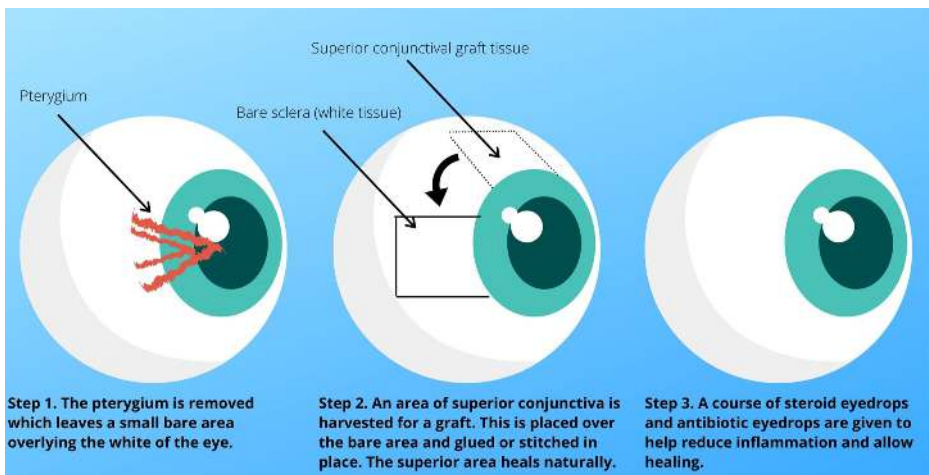
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## What does surgery involve?

Dr Ryan will remove the pterygium in its entirety. This involves removing tissue that extends back to the medial rectus (a muscle which pulls the eye inwards). The exposed area is then covered with a conjunctival graft (a small piece of superficial clear tissue from the same eye). This tissue is taken from the superior conjunctival area and glued over the surgical site. The glue is a fibrin based material derived from blood products. An alternative to glue is stitching the graft in place which is recommended in patients who prefer to avoid blood products e.g. Jehovah's Witness.



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## Prior to surgery

### Fasting instructions

Do not have anything to eat or drink for 6 hours prior to your operation. This ensures it is safe to give sedating medicine during your operation.

### Medication

You should continue your regular medications before and on the day of surgery. Despite the instructions regarding fasting, you are still permitted to take your regular medication with a small sip of water. Blood thinning medication may continue but do expect some redness and bruising around the eye following surgery. Diabetic medication including tablets and insulin will need to be adjusted and you will be advised accordingly.

## Caring for your eye after surgery

### What can I expect after surgery?

The eye can be red for up to 4 to 6 weeks, which is the time it takes for the graft to settle. Expect to have some pain and discomfort for 1-2 days following surgery. Medication will be provided to ease the discomfort. Eye drops will also be prescribed and compliance is very important in order to achieve a good cosmetic result and reduce the chance of recurrence of the pterygium. Do not rub the eye for two weeks as you risk dislodging the graft.

### Which drops and how often do I use them after surgery?

**Chloramphenicol 0.5%** eye drop four times a day for two weeks.

**Maxidex (dexamethasone 0.1%)** eye drop six times a day for two weeks. Then four times a day for four weeks.

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## Caring for your eye after surgery

### When can I exercise?

You may resume exercise three days following surgery as long as the eye remains clean.

### When can I drive?

Most patients can drive 3-4 days following surgery. Your ability to drive will depend on your recovery and the vision in your other eye. Dr Ryan can advise you when it is safe to resume driving.

### When can I swim?

Do not swim for two weeks after pterygium surgery.

### When can I return to work?

It is recommended to plan for one week off work but some may return sooner depending on the type of work.

### What is your advice about cleaning around my eye?

You are advised to be careful when washing: do not directly splash water into your face in the shower or immerse your head in the bath for one week after surgery, but a clean face cloth can safely be used. It is also advised to avoid make-up around the eye for two weeks.

### When can I acquire new glasses?

It is likely your glasses prescription will change following surgery. You can have your eyes checked for new glasses by your optometrist six weeks after the operation. If you are having your second eye operated on then wait till both operations are completed to avoid excessive costs in relation to new glasses.

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## Risks associated with surgery

### **Recurrence of the pterygium**

The risk of pterygium growing back is 3%. Further surgery is required in this situation.

### **Pain**

Most patients report the eye being uncomfortable for 1-2 days then significantly improving from there.

### **Cosmesis**

It is expected that the eye will be red and swollen for up to 6 weeks following surgery. In a small number of cases there can be persistent redness or swelling of the eye.

### **Infection**

Infection is a rare complication and the risk is further reduced by the use of antibiotic eye drops after the procedure.

### **Reduced vision**

The risk of vision loss is extremely rare but still a possibility during any eye operation.

### **Dry eyes**

Ocular surface irritation is common following surgery and most cases resolve with time. The use of lubricant eye drops help alleviate the symptoms.

### **High pressure in the eye**

The most common reason for high pressure after the operation is due to steroid eye drops. This is monitored by Dr Ryan during your post operative visits.

### **Double vision**

Due to the close proximity of the pterygium to the medial rectus muscle, there is a small risk of double vision if damaged. In rare instances an operation to rectify this is required.

### **Ptosis (drooped eyelid)**

Following eye surgery the eyelid may appear lower due to stretching of the eyelid muscle. This is rare and more likely in advanced age.

### **Anaesthetic risk**

The eye is numbed with an injection around outside the of it. Great care is taken when administering the anaesthetic, although in some cases it can perforate the globe and cause injury to tissue inside the eye.

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	Chlorsig eye drops (0.5%) One drop to the operated eye four times a day for two weeks.	Maxidex (dexamethasone 0.1%) One drop to the operated eye six times a day for two weeks then four times a day for four weeks.
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