

Red eyes: summer calls for eye protection, too

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 Community Submission

As spring and summer approach, we are constantly warned about the dangers of increased sun exposure.

Dermatologists caution us about melanoma. Doctors urge us to remain hydrated during outdoor activities but

there is really not much a hue about another very distressful condition that increases in incidence with sun exposure: Pterygium.

Increased and consistent sun exposure especially in tropical and subtropical climates can lead to an eye condition where a yellow-red lesion



called pterygium can appear, and progress on the white of our eyes.

Pterygium, pronounced "terigeemum" is a raised, wedge-shaped growth of the conjunctiva (transparent saran wrap like layer covering the white of our eyes. This layer when infected causes the pink eye or conjunctivitis) which starts with a cosmetically unappealing, constantly red eye with symptoms of

irritation, redness and even tearing.

It is fairly common among sports and recreation enthusiasts, golfers, surfers, as well as outdoor workers. Although it often remains dormant and case mostly a cosmetic blemish with embarrassingly red and unhealthy looking eyes, it can be a relentless dis-

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order, growing across the cornea and adversely affecting vision."

As the pterygium develops affects vision in two ways, one, by directly acting as a scar and two, by altering the shape of the cornea and thereby even affecting vision.

Medical treatments for this condition are varied and far flung, all evidence to the fact that none of them work. Surgery has been the mainstay for this problem.

I do believe that most cases of pterygium are associated with dry eyes and as we had mentioned in our previous article, the dry eye needs to be treated with artificial tears, lacrimal plugs and medications like Restasis eyedrops.

Surgery for pterygium though is complicated by the fact that there is a high rate of recurrence of this lesion and also sometimes a scar that could look worse after surgery

Breakthrough techniques and technologies to address this condition rampant especially in our Florida climate, include the use of human placenta wherein after removing the lesion during surgery, a human amniotic graft (derived from human placenta that is tested to be disease-free) is applied to the area of surgery and this technique



is further raised by using Tissue glue instead of stitches resulting in not only an excellent surgical outcome but an outstanding cosmetic appearance including a lower rate of recurrence.

Additionally, Advanced Laser Vision surgery and Lasik can be performed on such patients to further make them see without glasses or contact lenses in keeping with my philosophy of "Look Good and See Good".

Even with such surgical advances and pharmaceutical landmarks, I believe that prevention is still the best medicine.

Since pterygiums are most commonly caused by sun exposure, protecting the eyes from sun, dust and wind is recommended, including wearing good sunglasses with UV protection.

So, in Summer, we must protect our skin but do not forget to bring your hats, wetting drops and wrap around, UV blocking sunglasses to the beach.

Dr. Gulani is a world renowned eye surgeon and Lasik specialist. Former Chief of the Cornea service and Asst. Professor at University of Florida, School of Medicine; he is Founding Director of the Gulani Vision Institute. For more information, visit www.gulanivision.com

Photo courtesy of Gulani Vision

"I travelled from Vancouver, Canada, to Dr. Gulani for clear eyes," said feature model Zarella.