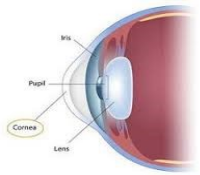


Background:



The **Cornea** is the transparent front part of the eye that covers the iris, pupil, and the other front components of the eye, known as the anterior chamber.

A **corneal ulcer** forms when the surface of the cornea is damaged or compromised. Ulcers may be sterile (uninfected) or infectious.

“**Infiltrate**” is a common alternate term for an ulcer, and refers to an immune response causing an accumulation of cells or fluid in an area of the body where they do not normally belong.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Red Eye
- Severe pain (not in all cases)
- Tearing
- Discharge
- White spot on the cornea
- Light sensitivity

Causes:

There are many causes of corneal ulcers:

- 1) Bacteria
- 2) Fungus
- 3) Amoebae
- 4) Mycobacteria
- 5) Viruses
- 6) Immune Disease

It is important to bring any medications that you take by eye or by mouth to the attention of your doctor.

It is also important to follow directions to medications carefully, and to consult your physician on proper usage of medications.

Diagnosis:

Corneal ulcers are diagnosed with a careful examination using a slit lamp microscope. Special types of eye drops containing dye, such as fluorescein, may be instilled to highlight the ulcer, making it easier to detect.

If an infectious organism is suspected, the doctor may order a culture. After being numbed with drops, cells are gently scraped from the corneal surface and tested for potential infectious organisms.

Bacterial ulcers are extremely painful and are usually associated with a break in the epithelium, the outermost layer of the cornea (see image). In some cases, the inflammatory response involves the anterior chamber along with the cornea.

Sterile infiltrates cause little pain, and are often found near the peripheral edge of the cornea, without breaks in the epithelium.

Treatment:

The course of treatment depends on whether the ulcer is sterile or infectious.

- Bacterial ulcers require aggressive treatment. In some cases, antibacterial eye drops are used every 15 minutes.
- Some patients with severe ulcers may require hospitalization for IV antibiotics and around-the clock therapy.
- Sterile ulcers are typically treated by reducing the eye's inflammatory response with steroid drops, anti-inflammatory drops and antibiotics.



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