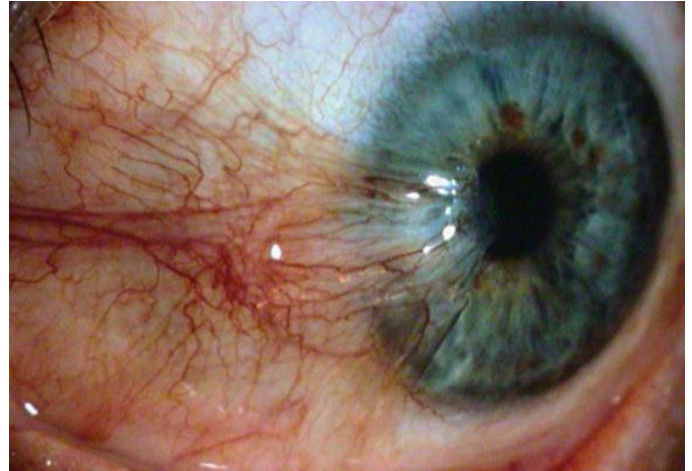


## Pterygium and Pingueculum

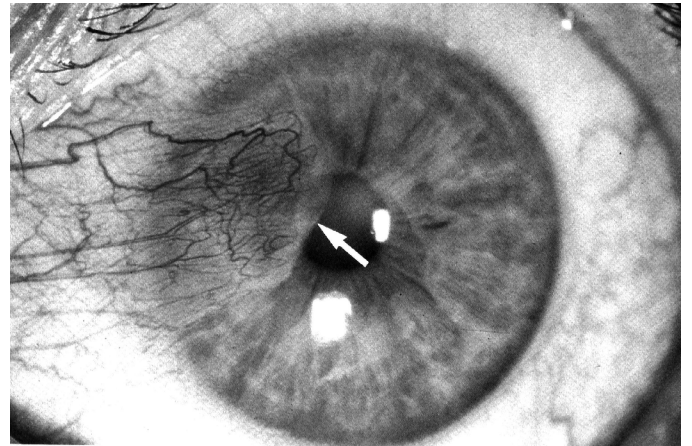
### ***What is a pterygium?***

A pterygium is a fleshy growth that invades the cornea (the clear front dome of the eye). It is an abnormal process in which the conjunctiva (a membrane which covers the white of the eye) grows into the cornea. A pterygium may be small or grow large enough to interfere with vision and commonly occurs on the inner corner of the eye.



### ***What causes a pterygium?***

A pterygium occurs more often in people who spend a great deal of time outdoors, especially in sunny climates. Long-term exposure to sunlight, especially **ultraviolet (UV) rays**, and chronic eye irritation from dry, dusty conditions seem to play an important causal role.



### ***How is a pterygium treated?***

When a pterygium becomes red and irritated, topical eyedrops or ointments may be used to reduce the inflammation. The indications for surgical treatment of a pterygium are: 1) prolonged discomfort and redness not relieved by eye drops 2) growth onto the cornea causing poor vision or inability to wear contact lenses, and 3) cosmetically objectionable. Surgical treatment is a very successful and effective method of treating pterygia. However, there is a chance that the pterygium may return. Protecting the eyes from UV light with proper sunglasses and avoiding dry, dusty conditions may help to prevent recurrences.

### ***What is a pingueculum?***

A pingueculum is a yellowish or pink patch or bump on the white of the eye. It is not a tumor, but an alteration of normal tissue resulting in a deposit of abnormal protein and fat. Unlike a pterygium, a pingueculum does not actually grow onto the cornea. A pingueculum may grow to become a pterygium, and also develops in response to chronic eye irritation and sunlight.

### ***How is a pingueculum treated?***

No treatment is necessary unless it becomes inflamed. A pingueculum does not threaten sight, but may progress to a pterygium unless the eye is protected from irritation and sunlight. If particularly annoying, a pingueculum may be surgically removed.

### ***Why are regular medical eye exams important for everyone?***

Eye disease can occur at any age. Many eye diseases do not cause symptoms until the disease has done damage. Since most blindness is preventable if diagnosed and treated early, regular medical exams by an ophthalmologist are very important. Why an ophthalmologist? Because an ophthalmologist provides total eye care: medical, surgical, and optical.