

PATIENT INFORMATION – PHOTOKERATITIS / ULTRAVIOLENT KERATITIS (also known as Arc Eye or Welder’s Flash)

What is it?

This is a painful eye condition caused by exposure of the eye to ultraviolet (UV) rays from either natural sources such as sun reflecting from snow, or artificial sources such as sun tanning beds, a welder's arc, photographic flood lamps and halogen desk lamps.

Photokeratitis is like sunburn of the cornea and conjunctiva, and is not usually noticed until several hours after exposure. Symptoms include redness, swollen eyelids, headache, increased tears and a feeling of pain, likened to having sand in the eyes. These symptoms may not appear until 6-12 hours after the UV exposure.

Treatment

- Keep the eye closed and rested
- You may have been given eye drops containing an ophthalmic antibiotic solution

When will my vision return?

Vision usually returns after 18 hours. The surface of the cornea usually heals with no long term complications within 24 to 48 hours.

To help ease any pain or discomfort you may be feeling, you can take simple painkillers such as Paracetamol*, which are available from your local chemist without a prescription. But, do not exceed the stated daily dosage.

Prevention

This type of injury can be prevented by wearing eye protection that blocks most of the ultraviolet radiation, such as welding goggles with the proper filters, a welder's helmet, sunglasses rated for sufficient UV protection, or appropriate snow goggles.

Local Services

PHOTOKERATITIS / ULTRAVIOLENT KERATITIS (also known as Arc Eye or Welder's Flash) CONT.

The NHS Direct Wales website allows you to search for local services in your area, such as Pharmacy and Sexual Health Clinics.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/

Choose the service you require and follow the guidance on how to search.



If you become unwell or are injured, choose the right NHS service to make sure you get the best treatment. The Choose Well campaign explains what each NHS service does, and when it should be used.

Choosing well means that you and your family will get the best treatment. It also allows busy NHS services to help the people who need them most.

If you are unsure about which option to choose, please call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 or visit the choose well website at www.choosewellwales.org.uk

This information has been produced based on previous information leaflets and the evidence available at the time of publication. It has been clinically reviewed however if you notice anything that needs updating or amending please contact ppi.team@wales.nhs.uk

If you require this information in another language or format please ask a member of staff.

For further advice or information contact NHS Direct Wales 0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk