

## Pinguecula



The most commonly encountered "bump" on the eye concerning patients is a fleshy-appearing growth called a pinguecula (ping-gwek-u-lah). They may be yellow, gray, white, or colorless. They are usually found on the white part of the eye in

the space between the eyelids, almost always on the side closest to the nose. Pingueculae are more common in middle-aged or older people but they can also be found in younger people and even children.

Overlying the white part of the eye (sclera) is a transparent mucous membrane called the conjunctiva. A pinguecula is a slow growth caused by the degeneration of the conjunctiva. In rare cases, the conjunctiva can also become red and irritated. Pingueculae can be found in one or both eyes and do not affect vision.

The exact cause or causes of this disorder is unknown, but it occurs more frequently in people who live in sunny and windy climates and people whose jobs expose them to ultraviolet (UV) light (for example, farmers and arc welders). The frequency also increases with age. There are often no symptoms of a pinguecula other than a cosmetic concern. Dry eye can sometimes contribute to increased irritation, resulting in a "foreign-body" sensation and inflammation.

Most people with pingueculae do not require treatment unless their symptoms are severe. Lubricating eye drops are normally recommended to relieve irritation and foreign-body sensation. Rarely a steroid drop is used to reduce inflammation. Everyone with pingueculae should wear UV-blocking sun protection to help reduce the irritation that contributes to the formation and progression of pingueculae. Only in very severe cases is surgical excision considered.

