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## Queensland Eye Institute & Prevent Blindness Foundation

**Dr Brendan Cronin**

[www.drbrendancronin.com.au](http://www.drbrendancronin.com.au)

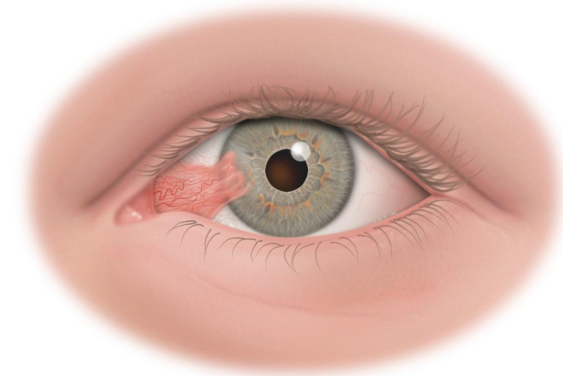
Queensland Eye Institute  
140 Melbourne Street  
South Brisbane QLD 4101

Phone: 07 3239 5000

Fax: 07 3844 2246



# Pterygium





## What is a pterygium?

A pterygium is a fleshy overgrowth of tissue on the surface of the eye. Australia has one of the highest rates of pterygia (the plural of pterygium) in the world due to our sunny climate, outdoor lifestyle and high UV exposure. When they are small, pterygia may not cause any concern at all, however, as they enlarge they may cause redness, irritation, corneal scarring, reduced vision, irregular astigmatism, tearing and an unsightly appearance.



## Can it be fixed?

If a pterygium is small and not causing problems then no treatment is required. However, a pterygium is damage that has been caused by the sun and as such, you should wear broad brimmed hats and good quality UV blocking wrap-around sunglasses. Ensure your sunglasses are purchased from your optometrist or reputable eyewear store and beware of cheap online websites as these inferior lenses may not meet Australian UV blocking standards, or even worse, may be counterfeit with no UV blocking qualities at all. During periods of cold or dry weather your pterygium may become red and inflamed – artificial tear drops will often relieve this irritation.

Removal of a pterygium requires surgery, there is no laser treatment or eye drop that will remove it. An ophthalmologist who specialises in corneal diseases generally performs the surgery. With modern surgical techniques, you can expect an excellent cosmetic result. However, even with surgery, it is important to take sun protection precautions afterwards to reduce the risk of recurrence.