

# CORNEAL BLINDNESS

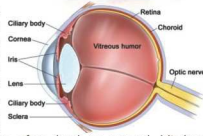
THE CURE FOR CORNEAL BLINDNESS ISN'T IN YOUR HANDS. IT'S IN YOUR EYES.

## Corneal Blindness – A Silent Epidemic

According to the World Health Organization, corneal blindness is the world's fourth leading cause of blindness with lakhs of patients suffering in India itself. With most of us turning a blind eye toward this growing epidemic, a cure for corneal blindness is progressively becoming difficult. First, because artificial corneas aren't readily available in the market; and second, hundreds of eyes are being wasted with cremation everyday. These two factors coupled with a sense of apathy towards the less fortunate, force more and more people to join the existing long list of patients waiting to regain their lost vision. The only way we can curb this menace is by pledging our eyes. After all, each of us can give sight to two blind people.

## What is Cornea?

The cornea is the clear, transparent tissue covering the front of the eye, responsible for more than 2/3 of the eye's focusing power. Factors such as physical injury, malnutrition, infection, chemical burns, congenital disorders and post-operative complications often lead to corneal blindness, sometimes even at an early age.



## Open Your Eyes To Healthy Sight

### Eat healthy:

All children below 6 years of age should be provided with supplementary doses of Vitamin-A solution. Blueberries, cherries, pomegranates and food rich in DHA can help prevent macular degeneration, one of the most common causes of blindness in India.



### Vaccinate on time:

Immunization as per schedule is important. For example, the Rubella

vaccine goes a long way in preventing transfer of infections from the mother to the newborn, thus preventing the occurrence of severe ocular diseases including corneal clouding.

### Stay safe:

Use of protective devices and headgear for appropriate eye protection by people involved in high-risk industrial work or agricultural labor can reduce the risk of corneal injuries to a great extent. Keep sharp articles away from the reach of children. Special caution should also be taken while playing with colours or burning crackers.

### Visit an eye specialist:

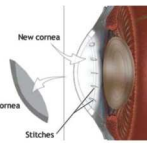
In addition, traditional medicine practices including home remedies need to be discouraged and an eye specialist should be consulted even for minute eye problems.

### Surgical cure:

Once a corneal scar develops, surgical management remains the only option for visual rehabilitation. Corneal transplantation, also known as corneal grafting, is the definitive treatment for a corneal scar.

## Corneal Grafting

Sight lost due to corneal diseases can only be restored through corneal transplantation - a clinical procedure in which the damaged cornea of the patient is replaced with a clear, healthy cornea. Since artificial corneas have not been developed yet, corneal transplant or grafting is possible only when a voluntary donor pledges and donates his or her eyes after death.



## Let Your Eyes Live Long

Let your eyes change someone's life. Pledging eyes for donation can light up the lives of millions of people who are waiting to see the world. A deceased person can bring the gift of sight to two people.

Almost any one of any age can pledge to donate his or her eyes after death. It doesn't matter even if the donor has a history of hypertension, diabetes, asthma or tuberculosis. Spectacle wearers and people who have undergone an operation for cataract can also donate their eyes.

## What You Should Do

Eyes have to be removed within six hours of time of death, therefore the nearest eye bank or eye collection centre must be informed of the death immediately. You could be instrumental in ensuring an eye donation in time.

Till the authorized person comes to remove the eyes, switch off the fans, keep air conditioner or cooler running and place wet cotton with ice over the closed eyelids. It will help keep the tissue moist and increase the viability of the donated cornea.

The eyes are removed by a trained person using a sterile procedure, that doesn't cause scars or disfigurement of the face. The donated eyes are never bought or sold and the identity of the donor is kept confidential.

eye opener

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is cornea?

Cornea is the glass like covering over the pupil of the eye.

### Why does the cornea get damaged?

The cornea usually gets damaged because of infections or injuries of the eye or poor nutrition especially in childhood.

### How can the eyesight in these patients be restored?

Persons who have lost their sight because of damaged cornea can hope to regain it with corneal grafting.

### Who can be an eye donor?

Almost any one of any age and sex can pledge to donate their eyes. It doesn't matter if you wear glasses or have undergone a cataract operation or any other eye surgery. All that is needed is a clear and healthy cornea.

### Are any costs involved in eye donation?

Eye donations does not have any costs involved. The removal of eye service is provided free of cost by the Eye Bank.

### Can I choose who will receive the corneas from my eyes?

You may make a request to that effect to the eye bank. But the corneas are usually transplanted into the next two patients on the waiting list to avoid any unfair practice.



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