

## Ocular Trauma: This Sensitive Injury Merits a Vet Visit

Even if you have the slightest suspicion that your pup has injured this, get him to a vet. Signs of severe trauma may not be immediately obvious, and delay can result in long-term problems. Here's what to watch out for in this very sensitive part of his body.

**Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Ocular trauma, or injury to your dog's eye, can occur from the application of either blunt or sharp force to the eye
- Dogs at highest risk for eye injuries are puppies and young dogs that don't yet know to be careful around cats; and working and hunting dogs that are outdoors running through wooded areas and brush
- Symptoms of ocular trauma depend on whether the injury is relatively mild or quite severe
- Treatment of canine eye injuries depends on the extent and severity of the injury and the part of the eye that is involved

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Ocular trauma, or trauma to your dog's eye, can result from the application of either blunt or sharp force to the eye.

Blunt force injuries typically occur when a flat or dull object strikes the surface of the eye, injuring but not penetrating it. This type of injury can result in forward displacement of the eye from the socket (the eyeball literally pops out of the socket). It can also result in lens displacement, bleeding in the front chamber of the eye, retinal detachment, fractures of bones surrounding the eye, and even rupture and collapse of the eyeball.

Sharp injuries are the result of a piercing, pointed, or jagged-edged object striking the eye. This damage is typically the result of an encounter with a cat's claws, thorns, branches, sticks, pens/pencils, sharp toys, or small airborne objects. The injuries that result can include laceration or abrasion of the eyelids, cornea, conjunctiva, or sclera. There can also be penetration of the cornea or the eyeball itself, bleeding in the front of the eye, lens displacement, lens capsule tear, and orbital injuries.

### Dogs at Highest Risk for Ocular Trauma

Eye trauma happens to dogs of all ages, though puppies and young dogs are more likely to get in the way of a cat's claws, and are also more apt to wander away from their owners and get hurt. This is also true for unsupervised intact male dogs.

Other dogs at higher risk for ocular injuries are working, hunting and outdoor dogs who run through wooded areas and brush. These dogs are also more likely to come in contact with other off-leash or wild animals, as well as vehicles.

## Signs and Symptoms of an Eye Injury

If the injury to the eye is mild, a dog may show one or more of the following signs of discomfort:

- Increased blinking and/or squinting
- Minor bleeding from the eye or eyelid
- Excessive tearing
- Bruising around the face and/or head
- Eye redness
- Protrusion of the third eyelid
- Clouding of the cornea
- Pawing at the eye

If the trauma to the eye is serious, the dog may show one or several of these signs:

- Extreme pain, reluctance to have the head touched or examined
- Color changes of the eye, including corneal cloudiness and increased redness
- Closed or squinted eyelids
- Abnormalities in the shape of the eye itself or structures around it
- Increased eye discharge, including tearing, mucus, or bleeding
- Lethargy, reluctance to eat or drink
- Bleeding within the eye with subsequent blindness
- Signs of trauma to other areas of the body

## Diagnosing Eye Trauma

Your veterinarian will need to determine the severity and extent of your dog's eye injury using a variety of diagnostic tests based on the results of a physical exam and symptom history.

Your pet will be examined for head injuries and swelling and fractures of the skull, nose, and jaw. If the eye injury is severe, your dog will be evaluated for other potential injuries that may be life-threatening, such as trauma to the chest or abdomen.

A complete ophthalmic examination will be performed to evaluate all structures of the eye and surrounding tissues. The cornea will be stained with fluorescein to check it for injury, and your dog may ultimately be referred to a board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist.

Your dog may also receive a neurologic examination and skull x-rays. The injured eye may need ultrasound imaging, and if brain injury is a possibility, a computerized tomography (CT) scan or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) may be performed.

## Treatment Options

Treatment of ocular trauma depends on the extent and severity of the injury and the part of the eye that is involved. Treatment may include medical and/or surgical intervention.

For example, if the wound is non-penetrating and there is no wound edge or opening, your dog will probably be placed in an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) to prevent him from further injuring the eye. Antibiotic or atropine eye medications may be prescribed.

If a non-penetrating injury involves a mild tear in the tissue or a pinpoint perforation, it may be treated with a soft contact lens, the E-collar, and appropriate eye medications.

Ocular trauma that requires surgical evaluation and/or repair includes:<sup>1</sup>

- Full-thickness corneal laceration
- Full-thickness wounds in which the iris is involved
- Full-thickness scleral or corneoscleral lacerations
- Removal of a foreign object or a rupture of the white of the eye
- Simple non-perforating wound with edges that are mildly or obviously broken and are greater than two-thirds the corneal thickness

Medications that are often prescribed in cases of ocular trauma depend on the severity of the wound and can include antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and analgesics for pain.

## Aftercare

If you suspect or know your dog has received an injury to her eye, you should seek immediate help from your veterinarian or an emergency animal hospital. Many forms of ocular trauma can compromise your dog's vision, and most are uncomfortable and even painful.

Insure your dog remains quiet and in a safe area to minimize further damage to the eye. Don't allow her to rub or paw at the injury. You may need to put an E-collar on her to keep her from further injuring the eye.

There are some excellent homeopathic remedies (based on your dog's specific symptoms) that can encourage a rapid healing response. Don't administer any of type of human eye medications to your dog.

## Preventing Eye Trauma

Make sure your dog is on-leash and/or closely supervised when he's outdoors to avoid unanticipated encounters with other animals, traffic, and other potential hazards.

Keep your dog, especially if he's a puppy or youngster, away from cats until he learns how to approach them, and make sure any kitties in your home have an escape route wherever they may encounter your dog.

Discourage your dog from running through thick vegetation, especially if he is visually impaired. If you are in an area where it's possible that debris will get into your dog's eyes, for example, in wooded areas or at the beach, come prepared with a bottle of saline eyewash to flush foreign debris from the eye.

## Sources and References

[PetMD](#)

<sup>1</sup> [PetPlace](#)

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