

Indolent Ulcers

Frequently Asked Questions

Indolent ulcers, or recurrent ulcers, are a specific type of corneal ulcer in which the outer layer of the cornea (the epithelium) will not adhere to the underlying layer (the stroma). This condition often occurs spontaneously in dogs over six years of age. Certain breeds of dogs (Boxers) are more commonly affected. Regardless of the cause, these ulcers can persist for months if left untreated, causing pain and scar formation.

What are the options for treating indolent ulcers?

A common therapy for indolent ulcers involves removal of the unhealthy surrounding tissue followed by stimulation for healing using a diamond burr corneal debridement. This minor procedure is done under topical anesthetic, sometimes at the time of the initial examination. Healing from the procedure normally takes approximately two weeks. The success rate for this form of therapy is about 90%. This does mean that 10% of dogs require more than one diamond burr corneal debridement be performed for resolution of the ulcer.

Another therapy option is a grid keratotomy, which uses a small needle to encourage healing. A third option is superficial keratectomy, which removes all of the underlying and surrounding diseased tissue in a surgical manner using a microscope for visualization and under general anesthesia. This technique is generally reserved for severe, long-standing cases for the few patients that will not respond to multiple diamond burr corneal debridements or grid keratotomies.

What can I expect following the procedure?

After the grid keratotomy is performed, the ophthalmologist may recommend placement of a contact lens for protection of the ulcer site and pain control. The contact lens contains microscopic holes to allow medications to penetrate through it and reach the ulcer site. The contact lens does not need to be removed and cleaned, and in most situations stays in for a full two weeks, or at least long enough to encourage the healing process. If a contact lens was placed on your pet and it falls off, please throw it in the trash as long as there is no evidence of corneal infection.

Should my pet be taking medicine?

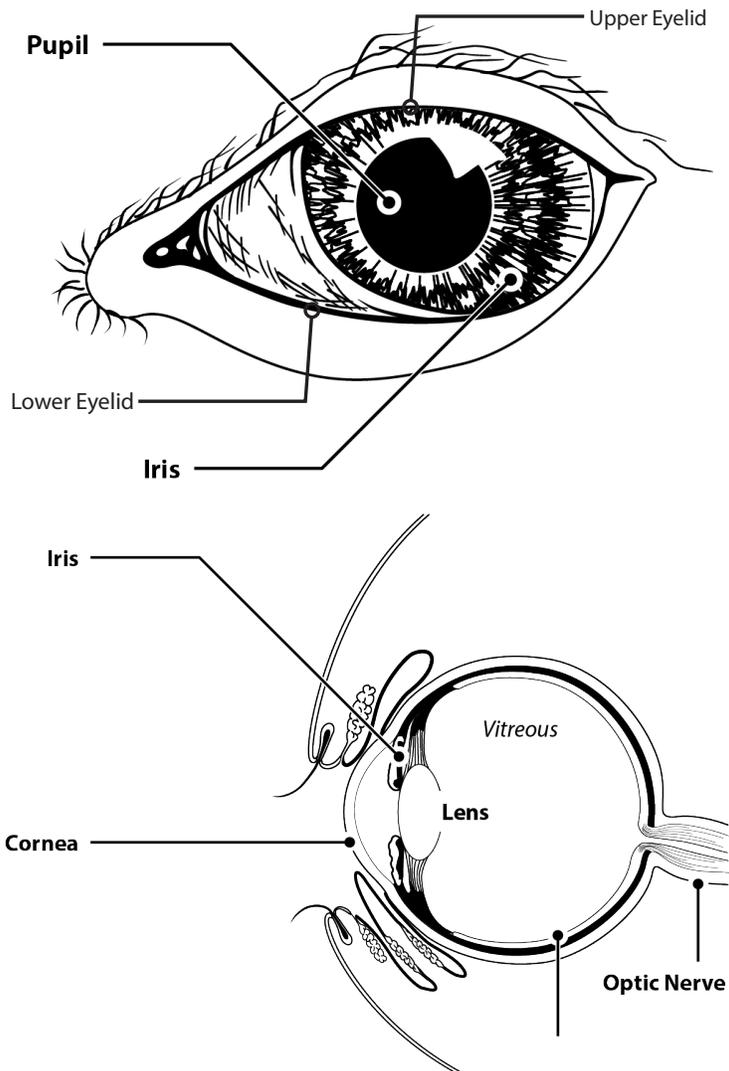
Your pet's own body will heal the ulcer after the grid keratotomy or diamond burr keratectomy is performed. Medications do not directly heal ulcers. Medications recommended by the ophthalmologist are utilized to try to prevent the ulcer site from getting infected, and to encourage healing. In some patients, age, concurrent disease or ulcer site infections can prolong the resolution of the ulcer. Your MedVet ophthalmologist will help assess your pet's readiness for the procedure and the best way to ensure a smooth return to normal after the procedure.

Important points in treatment

- This is not a type of ulcer that can be prevented. It is a defect in the layers of the cornea due to your dog's age and/or breed.
- There is no way to determine how many diamond burr corneal debridements your pet will need for ulcer resolution.
- Once the initial ulcer is healed, your pet may develop this type of ulcer again in the same eye or the opposite eye.
- Do not allow your pet to rub at the eye. This will discourage healing, as your pet will be wiping away any cells that have started the healing process. If a contact lens is placed, rubbing the eye may result in it being removed.
- An E-collar is strongly recommended to allow the delicate epithelial cells to heal the defect and to prevent secondary infection of this open wound on your dog's eye.

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What does it mean to be specialized in veterinary ophthalmology?

An ophthalmologist specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions involving the eyes and associated structures. The veterinary ophthalmologists at VEI have dedicated their practice to protecting and preserving sight in all animal species including dogs, cats, horses, birds, exotics, and zoo animals.

Highly specialized equipment, identical to that used by your own ophthalmologist, is used by veterinary ophthalmologists for examination and treatment of your pet. Our operating rooms are also equally equipped to handle the very specific needs of eye surgery including operating microscopes and microsurgical instrumentation and equipment.

A board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO). There are just over 300 actively practicing members of the ACVO in North America. To become a Diplomate of the ACVO, one must complete a one-year internship and a three-year ophthalmology residency after graduation from veterinary school. These residencies are very rigorous and highly competitive. After successful completion of the residency, the veterinarian may be eligible to sit for the board examinations. If the candidate passes all four parts of the examination, he or she becomes a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists.

About VEI

Veterinary Eye Institute (VEI) is the leading veterinarian owned and led network of stand-alone ophthalmology practices dedicated to making the world a visually clear and comfortable place for pets. VEI offers complete medical and surgical eye care for dogs, cats, horses, small mammals, and exotic pets.

To learn more about VEI's services and team or to find a location near you, visit veterinaryeyeinstitute.com.