



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Ectropion

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001007.htm

## Ectropion

Ectropion is the turning out of the eyelid so that the inner surface is exposed. It most often affects the lower eyelid.

### Causes

Ectropion is very often caused by the aging process. The connective (supporting) tissue of the eyelid becomes weak. This causes the lid to turn out so that the inside of the lower lid is no longer against the eyeball. It can also be caused by:

- A defect that occurs before birth (for example, in children with Down syndrome)
- Facial muscle weakness
- Scar tissue from burns or injuries

### Symptoms

Symptoms include:

- Dry, painful eyes
- Excess tearing of the eye (epiphora)
- Eyelid turns outward (downward)
- Long-term (chronic) conjunctivitis
- Keratitis
- Redness of the lid and white part of the eye

If you have ectropion, you will most likely have excess tearing. This happens because the eye gets dry, then makes more tears. The excess tears can't get into the tear drainage duct. Therefore, they build up inside the lower lid and then spill over the edge of the lid onto the cheek.

### Exams and Tests

The health care provider will make a diagnosis by doing an exam of the eyes and eyelids. Special tests are not needed most of the time.

## Treatment

Artificial tears (a lubricant) may ease dryness and keep the cornea moist. Ointment may be helpful when the eye can't close all of the way, such as when you are asleep.

Surgery is very often effective. When ectropion is related to aging or paralysis, the surgeon can tighten the muscles that hold the eyelids in place. If the condition is due to scarring of the skin, a skin graft or laser treatment may be used. The surgery is most often done in the office or at an outpatient surgery center. A medicine is used to numb the area (local anesthesia) before the surgery.

## Outlook (Prognosis)

The outcome is very often good with treatment.

## Possible Complications

Corneal dryness and irritation may lead to:

- Corneal abrasions
- Corneal ulcers
- Eye infections

Corneal ulcers can cause vision loss.

## When to Contact a Medical Professional

Make an appointment with your provider if you have symptoms of ectropion.

If you have ectropion, get emergency medical help if you have:

- Vision that is getting worse
- Pain
- Sensitivity to light
- Eye redness that is getting worse quickly

## Prevention

Most cases cannot be prevented. You may want to use artificial tears or ointments to prevent injury to the cornea, especially if you are waiting for a more permanent treatment.

## References

Cioffi GA, Liebmann JM. Diseases of the visual system. In: Goldman L, Cooney KA, eds. *Goldman-Cecil Medicine*. 27th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2024:chap 391.

Maamari RN, Couch SM. Ectropion. In: Yanoff M, Duker JS, eds. *Ophthalmology*. 6th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 12.6.

Olitsky SE, Marsh JD. Abnormalities of the lids. In: Kliegman RM, St. Geme JW, Blum NJ, et al, eds. *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics*. 22nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2025:chap 664.

## Review Date 7/9/2024

Updated by: Audrey Tai, DO, MS, Athena Eye Care, Mission Viejo, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

### Learn how to cite this page



Health Content  
Provider  
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider ([www.urac.org](http://www.urac.org)). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health