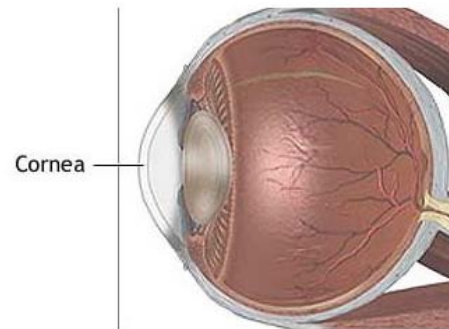




Fuchs' Dystrophy

The cornea is the transparent front part of the eye that covers the iris, pupil, and anterior chamber. Together with the lens, the cornea refracts light, and as a result helps the eye to focus. **Fuchs' dystrophy** is an eye disease in which cells lining the inner surface of the cornea slowly start to die off and causes difficulties in vision. The disease usually affects both eyes.

Fuchs' dystrophy affects the thin layer of cells that line the back part of the cornea. This layer is called the endothelium. The disease occurs when these cells slowly start to die off. (The cause is unknown.) The cells help pump excess fluid out of the cornea. As more and more cells are lost, fluid begins to build up in the cornea, causing swelling and a cloudy cornea.



At first, fluid may build up only during sleep, when the eye is closed. As the disease gets worse, small blisters may form in the endothelium. In severe cases, the blisters get bigger and may eventually break, causing eye pain. Fuchs dystrophy can also cause the shape of the cornea to change, causing further vision problems. Other symptoms include worsening vision throughout the day, eye sensitivity to light, especially glare.

Fuchs' dystrophy can be inherited, which means it can be passed down from parents to children. However, the condition may also occur in persons without a known family history of the disease.

Fuchs' dystrophy is more common in women than in men. Vision problems usually do not appear before age 50, although doctors may be able to see signs of the disease in affected persons at an earlier age, usually in their 30s and 40s.

Eye drops or ointments that draw fluid out of the cornea are sometimes used to relieve symptoms of Fuchs' dystrophy. If painful sores develop on the cornea, soft contact lenses or surgery to create flaps over the sores may help reduce pain.

The only cure for Fuchs' dystrophy is a corneal transplant. Fuchs' dystrophy is one of the leading reasons for corneal transplant in the United States. There are different levels of severity of the disease and not all patients require a corneal transplant. Dr. Currier can diagnose Fuchs' Dystrophy during a routine slit-lamp exam and answer further questioning about the eye disease.