

## The Quick Summary

There is a very common change present in your cornea, which is causing scratches in your eye. We can work with you to decrease the frequency of scratches.

### Epithelial Basement Membrane Dystrophy

Dr. Shalwala sees some changes in the outside part of your cornea. The cornea is a clear “windshield” that is the very front of your eyeball. The cornea has different layers, and the very outside layer is the epithelium. The epithelium can be thought of as the “skin” of the cornea, which is a layer that can regenerate and replace itself (the way we typically think of skin). The other main parts of the cornea (the stroma and the endothelium) do not regenerate at the same rapid rate.



The epithelium has cells in it, which are held in place tightly by attachment to what we call a “basement membrane.” The basement membrane keeps the epithelium rooted where it is. Most people have a smooth, even basement membrane that extends over the entire cornea.

Some people have a condition in which the basement membrane is not smooth and even. There are some irregularities. You have some of these irregularities. In the spot where these irregularities occur, the basement membrane is not doing its job properly, so the epithelium is not rooted as tightly as it should be. This is leading to areas where the epithelium is lost (even by something as seemingly minor as the eyelid passing over it). When the epithelium is lost, there is a “scratch” on the eye.

Why do you have these basement membrane irregularities? They might have been inherited, or they might have been caused by getting injured in that particular part of the cornea.

We have treatments that can decrease the rate of scratches occurring on your eye, which we will discuss with you and choose the right fit. In any case, you will probably want to use ointment in your eyes before you go to sleep every night. This is because when you have your eyes closed to sleep, your eyelid “sticks” to your eyeball, and, if the epithelium is loose, it can rip open a scratch when you open your eyes after sleeping. Ointment will lubricate the space between the eyelid and the eyeball so that the eyelid won’t “stick” to your eyeball as tightly, so the chances of ripping open a scratch are lower.

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