

Fact Sheet: What is Trachoma?

Australia is the only developed country with trachoma, the leading cause of infectious blindness in 42 countries. It is still present in remote Aboriginal communities. Repeated infection by the bacterium *C. Trachomatis* can lead to irreversible blindness. But trachoma is entirely preventable, and infections can be treated quickly and effectively.

Who is affected and why

Trachoma arises from poor personal and community hygiene. The eye secretions are easily shared among children, particularly within families. Repeated episodes cause prolonged inflammation, scarring and damaging the eyelids, and turning-in the eyelashes (trichiasis). This scars the cornea and eventually leads to blindness.

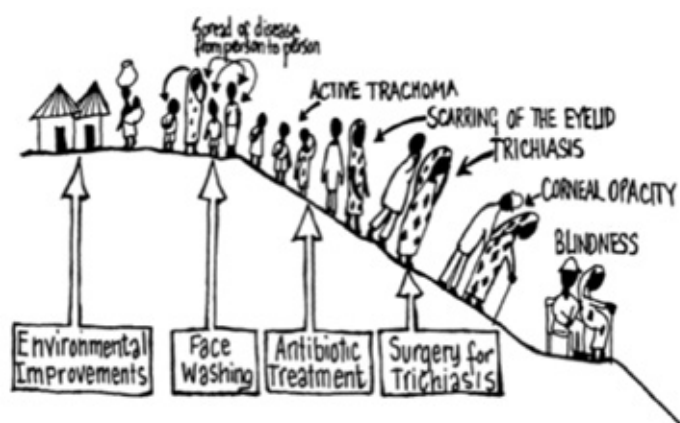
How we can end Trachoma in Australia

Blindness from trachoma can be prevented through the World Health Organisation's SAFE strategy: Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial cleanliness and Environment improvement (image 2).

The Australian Government helps fund trachoma screening and treatment. Rotary will work on prevention with the Australian Trachoma Alliance, including the Fred Hollows Foundation and Indigenous Eye Health.

Rotary can support good hygiene by working with remote, overcrowded communities to improve infrastructure and washing/toilet facilities. Personal hygiene can be encouraged through the provision of personal care packs, by supporting swimming pools, and ensuring functional washrooms/toilets.

By preventing unnecessary blindness, we will enable a brighter future for Indigenous Australians. The gift of vision allows people to see, read, learn, and opens up opportunities for communities. Trachoma prevention through hygiene also reduces other hygiene-related diseases such as rheumatic fever, gastro-intestinal and middle-ear infections, and scabies.



Rotary
Districts of Australia



EndTrachoma by 2020
Rotary - Building Healthy Communities