

Paediatric information

Blepharitis

Blepharitis is a common condition that causes inflammation of the eyelids. It is a common eye disorder throughout the world and affects people of all ages.

How you see the world

If you have blepharitis your eyesight is rarely affected, but the condition could be uncomfortable and persistent and prevent you from doing normal daily activities.

Symptoms you might have can include:

- red, greasy and sore eyelids
- thickened and swollen eyelids
- tiny flakes or crusts that look like dandruff at the bottom of the eyelashes
- a feeling that there is something in your eye
- itchy, dry or burning eyes
- sensitivity to light
- blurred vision
- eyelashes growing inwards
- occasional loss of eyelashes and scarring of the eyelids

How the world sees you

If you have blepharitis you might have red, puffy or crusty eyelids and sometimes red eyes.

Why did I get it?

The exact cause of blepharitis is not known, but people who have skin conditions like eczema seem to get it more.

What causes it?

Your eyelids contain tiny glands that make oil which mixes with tears to keep your eyes moist and comfortable. If these glands become blocked, it prevents them from keeping your eyes properly lubricated. This can make your eyes feel sore or gritty.

There are two types of blepharitis:

Anterior blepharitis affects the front of your eyelid, where your eyelashes are attached. Anterior blepharitis is caused by a sensitivity to a substance produced by bacteria (staphylococcus) normally found on the skin. Some people are sensitive to this substance which leads to inflammation.

- **Posterior blepharitis** affects your inner eyelid (the moist part that makes contact with your eye) and is caused by problems with the oil glands in this part of your eyelid.

How can the doctor tell?

The appearance of inflamed eyelid edges and flakes on the lashes is typical of blepharitis. An examination of the eyelids and eyelashes is usually enough to diagnose blepharitis. A slit lamp microscope is used for a more detailed examination.

Getting it sorted

If you have blepharitis, it can come back at any time, although the severity can vary.

Good eye care is essential to stop the condition occurring again, even when the symptoms are not there. The steps below, called lid hygiene, ease the symptoms:

- Warm compress: Soak cotton wool or a clean flannel in warm (but not hot enough to burn) tap water and gently press onto your closed eyelids for two to three minutes at a time.
- Massage your eyelids by gently rolling your finger over them in a circular motion. This helps to push the oil out from the tiny eyelid glands.
- Use a cotton bud slightly moistened in tap water to gently clean the edge of your lower lid.
- Pull the top lid away from your eyeball while looking in a mirror, and clean the edge gently.

Repeat this routine once or twice every day to prevent further flare-ups.

Facts

- Blepharitis does not usually affect vision or damage the eye in most people.
- Blepharitis is treated by careful cleaning of the eyelids

Occasionally antibiotics by mouth or steroid eye drops will be prescribed to treat your blepharitis. In some cases, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic ointment or eye drops. If you are asked to use these, follow the steps below:

1. Lie down, or lean the head back, and look up.
2. Use a clean finger to gently pull down your lower eyelid to create a pocket.
3. If you are using eye drops, gently squeeze them into the pocket you have created, not directly onto your eye.
4. If you are using ointment, apply a small strip into the pocket.
5. Blink to spread the medication over your eye.

When the going gets tough: lid cysts

Sometimes a chalazion (lid cyst) can grow, which is an enlargement of an oil gland and has similar symptoms to a sty. After a few days, the symptoms disappear, leaving a round, painless swelling sometimes with discolouration underneath the eyelid. Most disappear within a few months without treatment. To help the cyst to go, warm compresses can be used (see above).



In some people, especially children, blepharitis can cause serious inflammation of the eyes which can affect the health of the cornea (window of the eye). This is called blepharokeratoconjunctivitis (BKC) and needs medication such as long term low dose antibiotics by mouth, or stronger drops including steroids and ciclosporin to protect the vision.

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Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

