

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

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Blepharitis and Lid Hygiene

Ophthalmology Departments

Royle Eye Department, Pilgrim Hospital
01205 445626

Clinic 8, Lincoln County Hospital
01522 307180 (option 4)

www.ulh.nhs.uk

Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet is designed to give you information about blepharitis, its causes and treatment options.

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is the medical term for inflammation of the margins of the eye lids. It usually affects both eyes.

What are the causes?

Blepharitis may be due to a combination of one or more of the following:

- A disorder of the Meibomian (oil) glands at the edge of the eyelid.
- A build up of crusts around the eyelashes and the action of the body's own bacteria on this debris.
- Skin disorders such as dandruff of the scalp or rosacea.

What are the symptoms?

Blepharitis may cause one or more of the following:

- Persistent irritation or "burning" sensation.
- Itchiness around the eye.
- Sensation of "grit" in the eye.
- Scales on the eye lashes.
- Redness and swelling of the eyelid margins.
- Crusting of the eyelids, especially in the mornings.

Contact details

If you have any further questions or concerns, please ask us.

For further information telephone:

Royle Eye Department, Pilgrim Hospital 01205 445626

Monday to Thursday 8am to 8pm, Friday 9am to 5pm.

Clinic 8, Lincoln County Hospital 01522 307180 (option 4)

4. **Artificial tears** - these can help if your eyes are uncomfortable or gritty. They may also help if you have watery eyes. These can be used regularly and long term and repeat prescriptions can be obtained from your eye doctor, GP or pharmacist. There are many different artificial tears available and you may need to try a few to find the one that suits you the best.

Having followed the steps above, you should expect improvement within 2 to 8 weeks of starting the treatment. Once comfortable, regular cleansing may be reduced to alternate days or as necessary.

Blepharitis usually responds well to treatment, long term cleaning of the eye lids will need to be continued. Always be prepared to increase treatment should symptoms return.

- Watery eyes.
- Blurring of vision often helped by blinking.
- Redness of the eye.
- Eyelid cysts/styes.

How long will it last?

This condition is due to your skin type and thus cannot be cured. However, most people can control it with the measures discussed below although you may still suffer occasional flare-ups.

Is it serious?

No, although blepharitis can be uncomfortable for the sufferer, it rarely causes problems to the eye itself.

Is it an infection?

No, but there may be over activity of normal skin organisms. These germs (bacteria and occasional fungi) flourish in debris/secretions that build up on the edge of the eyelids. This is why regular cleaning of the eyelids is important.

What is the treatment?

A combination of many forms of treatment is used:

- Warm compresses.
- Careful cleaning of the eyelids and eyelashes.
- Antibiotic ointment, if prescribed.
- Artificial tears.

However, the mainstay of treatment is always careful cleaning of the eyelids and lashes to remove the irritating substances.

The treatment will need to be carried out twice a day. The frequency can, however, be progressively reduced as the condition responds to the treatment.

The aim of the treatment is to minimise your symptoms and keep your eyes more comfortable. Remember that blepharitis is a skin condition that may be with you for all your life. Regular lid hygiene should therefore become part of your daily routine. This includes:

1. **Warm compresses** - soak a clean face cloth in warm water; as warm as the eyelids can take. Apply it to the closed eyelids for 5 to 10 minutes. You may need to re-warm the cloth; this will make the scales on the lashes easier to remove.
2. **Eyelid cleaning** - cleaning of both the upper and lower eyelids, eyelid margins and eyelashes is extremely important. You can do this with either:
 - A clean cotton wool bud and a solution of diluted tea tree shampoo (a few drops to a pint of cooled boiled water).

OR

- A clean cotton wool bud and water as warm as you can manage, cooled from boiled water.

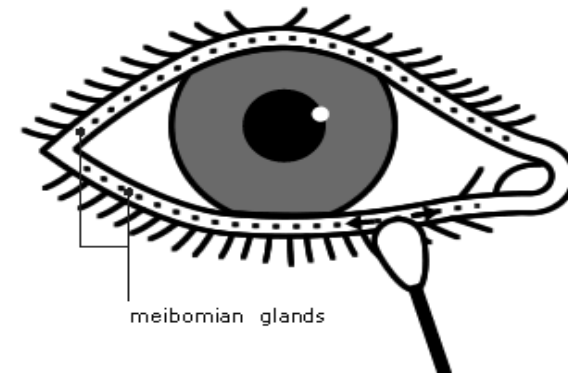
OR

- A clean cotton wool bud and a solution of diluted bicarbonate of soda. (The solution should be made up of 1 pinch of bicarbonate to an eggcup of water cooled as above).

OR

- You can use a product from your local pharmacy which has been specifically developed to clean eyelids thoroughly and gently.

Clean the eyelids, eyelid margins and eyelashes with a side to side motion. This should be carried out as often as directed by your doctor. This is usually twice a day.



3. **Antibiotic ointment** - if an antibiotic has been prescribed by your doctor, you should apply the ointment following the compresses and lid cleaning. Place a small amount of ointment on your clean fingertip and rub it into the upper and lower lid margin and lashes, usually morning and night.

This is often used for a number of weeks. It is then possible to get further prescriptions from your eye doctor, GP or pharmacist to use intermittently in the future if your condition flares up again.