



Blepharitis

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a condition involving inflammation of the eyelids and lid margins. This can result in red and swollen eyelids as a result of oil build-up within the glands around the eyes. The cause is usually unknown but blepharitis may occur as a reaction to the natural bacteria living on the eyelids. It is more common in skin conditions like seborrheic dermatitis, rosacea and acne and it is often associated with dry eyes.

What symptoms might I experience?

Blepharitis can cause burning, itching and pain around the eyes. As oil glands get blocked, you may notice crusting around the eyelids and eyelashes.

What can be done to treat it?

Blepharitis is usually a chronic (long-term) condition that unfortunately tends to recur. Serious complications such as vision loss are very rare, particularly when the advice given in this leaflet is followed.

Primary treatment involves following a simple daily routine (see instructions on the right) that helps to ensure the eyelids and eyelashes are kept as clean and irritant-free as possible. In more severe cases, antibiotic ointments, antibiotic tablets and steroid eye drops may be required.

Some studies also show that a diet which is high in omega 3 and omega 7 fatty acids can be beneficial in improving symptoms too. Examples of such foods include oily fish, flaxseeds, green leafy vegetables, soya beans and walnuts.

Certain environmental factors including wind and smoke can sometimes aggravate symptoms so you may find protecting your eyes with wrap-around glasses useful.

Blepharitis treatment routine

Symptoms should improve within 2–8 weeks if done twice daily.

- 1 Place a warm compress of a face cloth, flannel or towel over closed lids for 5–10 minutes **twice** a day to soften the oils within the eyelid glands.
- 2 Clean the lid margins/edges using a cotton bud dipped in boiled cooled water to remove any crusts and build-up that can exacerbate the condition. **Do not** use baby shampoo as this disrupts the natural tear film barrier and can cause further problems.
- 3 Massage the lids towards the eyelid edges to encourage oils to be released.
- 4 Repeat step 2 to ensure any expressed oils are cleaned away.
- 5 Apply ointment, using clean fingertips, rubbed onto the lid margin and lashes.



You can also squeeze some ointment inside the lower lid at bedtime but this can cause slight temporary blurring of vision.

It is important to remember that your symptoms may return if you stop following this routine, so try to make it a habit and a part of your daily schedule.

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Issued by:
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