

BLEPHARITIS

What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common inflammatory condition involving the oil glands which line the eyelid margins. It is the most common reason for dry eye symptoms and ocular irritation. It may be associated with some skin conditions, such as very dry or very oily skin, eczema or dermatitis.

What causes Blepharitis?

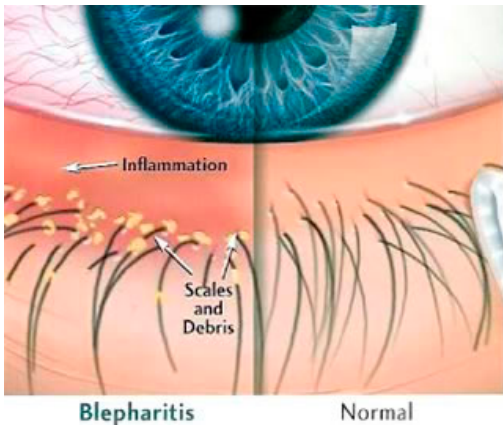
Blepharitis is caused by particles of dead skin and oil blocking the duct openings on the inner edge of the eyelids. Everyone has bacteria on their skin, but in some people, the bacteria thrive at the base of the lashes when there is buildup of oil. Large amounts of bacteria cause a buildup of skin and 'dandruff-like' debris at the base of the lashes. When left untreated, blepharitis can cause meibomian cysts, styes, conjunctivitis and marginal keratitis.

What are the symptoms?

Typical symptoms include irritation, soreness and redness of the eyelids.

Complications

Sometimes the inflammation may spread to the glands of the eyelid, or it may involve the surface of the eye itself, causing the white of the eye to become reddened (conjunctivitis). Often, blepharitis is accompanied by an oily discharge which leaves a crusty residue and/or scales on the eyelids. The eyelids may be stuck shut upon waking in the morning. If the eyelids are not cleaned properly, infectious micro-organisms can grow in the oily debris and buildup, and complications may develop.



Blepharitis vs. Stye

- Both occur on the eyelid or eyelid margin and can cause redness, pain and/or swelling
- A stye is a single lump / nodule along the lid margin associated with an oil gland
- Blepharitis involves the entire lid margin (and is usually in both eyes)
- A stye may require antibiotic treatment

TREATMENT

The goal of treatment is to improve the quality of the tear film. The main course of treatment is regular lid hygiene to reduce the inflammation in the eyelid. This needs to be carried out regularly for the long term to prevent symptoms recurring. Always wash your hands before and after touching your eyes.

Lid Hygiene

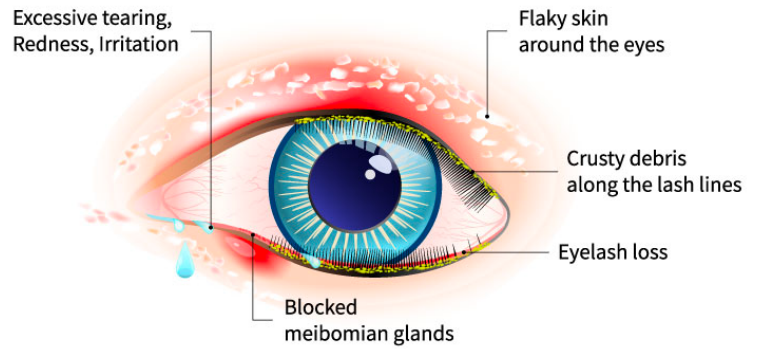
This is performed to remove any debris that has accumulated on the edges of the lids and from between the eye lashes.

- The cleaning solution can be made by diluting baby shampoo as follows: 1 part baby shampoo to 10 parts water.
- Use a cotton bud dipped in the solution above, to clean along the base of the lashes on the upper and lower lids using a side-to-side wiping motion.
- Commercially available products: Opti-Soothe Wipes, Blephadex, Sterilid, Systane Wipes, are also excellent, and convenient.

This will remove any crusts and debris from between the lashes of the upper and lower lids. Rinse the lids with clean water and gently dry with a clean towel.

How often will I need to clean my lids?

You will need to repeat the lid cleaning twice daily initially. However as your symptoms resolve, you will be able to do this once daily. As blepharitis is an ongoing condition, lid cleaning will need to be continued.



MAINTENANCE

Blepharitis is a chronic condition and requires chronic treatment. It can take up to 4 months of diligent, twice daily lid scrubs in order to see improvement. Please be patient. Symptoms wax and wane and generally return with discontinuation of treatment.

