

PATIENT INFORMATION

Blepharitis

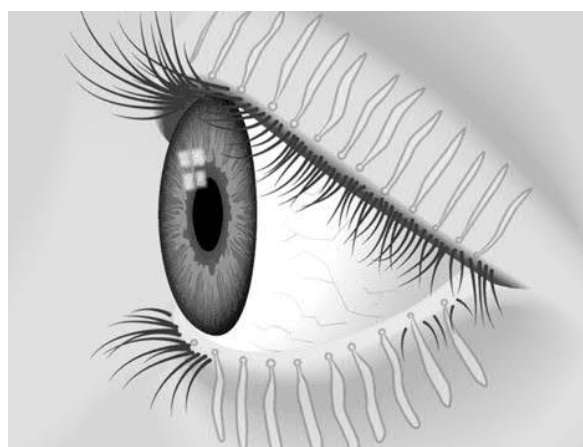
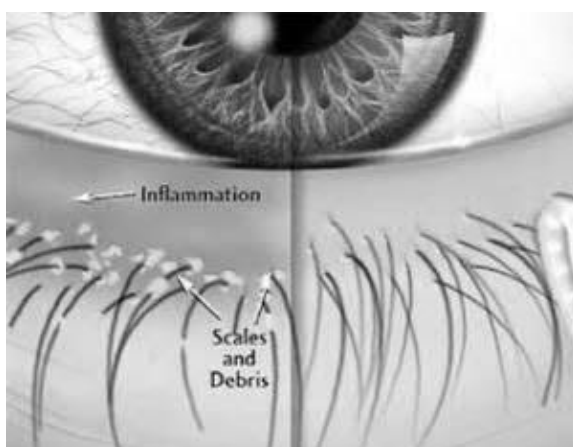
What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a condition characterised by inflammation of the eyelid margins and dysfunction of the oil glands (Meibomian glands) in the eyelid. It usually affects both eyes and although it is not serious, it can cause troublesome symptoms. The oily secretions from the Meibomian glands make up an important part of the healthy tear film, so when these glands are not working properly the eyes can feel dry, uncomfortable, and actually water.

Blepharitis

Normal

Meibomian Glands



What is the cause?

Usually a blockage of the Meibomian glands and a low grade inflammation of the eyelid margins.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Red, crusty eyelids
- Gritty, sore eyes
- Red eyes
- Irritable, burning eyes
- Watery eyes

How can blepharitis be treated?

There is no magic cure but measures can be taken to relieve your symptoms and keep blepharitis under control.

Thorough cleaning of the lid margins twice a day is the most effective measure. This will reduce the frequency and severity of flare-ups of blepharitis.

Lid cleaning

1. Warm compresses

These are to melt and soften the oils of the Meibomian glands, making it easier and more effective to remove blockages, express the oils, and improve the natural tear film.

To be most effective the heat required is 40°C for a minimum of 5 minutes. This is like the temperature of a warm bath. It is easiest to achieve this with a small bag designed to be heated in the microwave that contains beads, or a natural substance like wheat. Commercial heated eye masks designed to treat blepharitis are available for this purpose. They are available to buy at a reduced price from Torbay Outpatient Pharmacy.

2. Lid massage

Apply gentle pressure to the eyelid just above the eyelashes to squeeze the warmed and softened oils out of the Meibomian glands using your clean finger. Hold for a few seconds then move along the length of the eyelids.

3. Lid cleansing

Boil some water and let it cool. Add a pinch of Sodium Bicarbonate to an eggcup of water. **Or** add a few drops of baby shampoo to warm water in a small cup or bowl.

Then dip a cotton bud into the cleaning solution, pull the lower eyelid away from the eye with a finger and **gently scrub** along the eyelid margin removing any crusts from between the lashes. Clean the base/roots of the eyelashes, not inside the eyelid. For the top eyelid, this is often easiest with the eye closed.

There are commercially available lid wipes and solutions designed for this purpose that can be purchased. They are an effective way to do your lid hygiene and you may find these more convenient to use, which may help you to keep up with the treatment advised. These are available to buy at reduced price from Torbay Outpatient Pharmacy.

Other treatments

If the eyes are dry, replacing the tears with lubricants (artificial tear drops) may help to relieve symptoms. These can be obtained from your local pharmacy, and can be used as frequently as necessary to make your eyes feel comfortable. If you are using tear drops more than four times a day then we advise these should be preservative-free.

Some people find increasing foods high in omega-3 oils can improve their symptoms, or take supplements such as flax seed oil and fish oils.

If there are signs of infection present, your doctor may prescribe you a temporary course of antibiotic drops or cream.

Finally

Lid cleaning may be needed long-term. It takes time to be effective but once symptoms are under control, on-going lid cleaning will help to prevent further flare-ups of blepharitis.

I am due to have cataract surgery - will blepharitis affect this?

Infection in the eye is a rare but serious complication of cataract surgery. Bacteria from your eyelids can be the cause so it is important that your blepharitis is well controlled before surgery. For your safety your surgery may be cancelled on the day if the surgeon is concerned that your blepharitis has not been cleaned away properly and this is putting you at risk of infection.

PLEASE START YOUR LID HYGIENE TO BOTH EYES TODAY.

You will need to do this twice daily until your surgery.

You may have been prescribed chloramphenicol ointment, use as indicated by your nurse or doctor. Wash your hands, put the ointment onto your clean finger and rub it into the roots of your eyelashes.

If your blepharitis is quite severe your surgery may be postponed whilst it is properly treated. You may need to see one of the eye specialists in clinic for additional treatment to help you, and to make sure it is safe to proceed.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.