

Ophthalmology department

Blepharitis and eyelid hygiene treatment

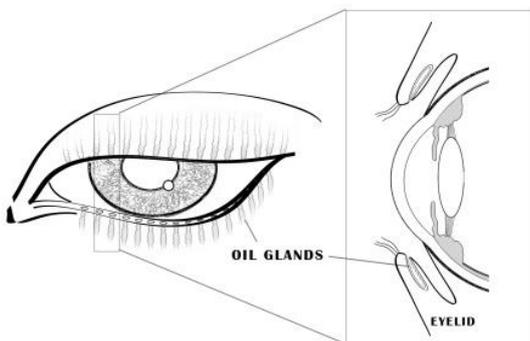
Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelid margins.

Tears are made from a delicate balance of oil and water. Anything which upsets this balance can cause symptoms.



Natural oil is produced by glands opening on the eyelid margins. If there is too much oil (either natural or from skin products), they can get stuck on the eyelashes as wax, or irritate the eye. Debris can get stuck on the wax, trap bacteria and irritate the surface of the eye.

Symptoms include:

- redness of eye or eyelid margin
- pain, dryness or irritation
- burning, stinging or watering

If wax builds up on the eyelid margins it can block the openings of the oil-producing glands. This can lead to styes, or lid cysts (lumps) which may need minor surgery.

How is blepharitis treated?

The aim of blepharitis treatment is to:

- clean the eyelid margins
- keep the eyelid margins clean
- avoid any irritants

Eyelid hygiene is very important and needs to become part of your daily routine. For example, when washing your face or cleaning your teeth:

- heat a flannel or face cloth in hot water from the tap
- hold against closed eyelids for 10 seconds to melt the wax
- rewarm the flannel and repeat several times
- use the flannel to firmly wipe the margins of the upper and lower lids at the base of the eyelashes to remove any wax and debris



Please avoid the following as they can make your symptoms worse:

- rubbing your eyes – this causes more irritation and increases the need to rub. This starts a vicious cycle which needs to be broken
- using face creams, moisturisers, cleansers, make-up removers, etc. Your skin may become dry for a couple of weeks until it regains its natural balance

Always wash your hands after applying sun cream and use a sun hat.

Eye liner and mascara do not usually cause problems so you can continue to use them.

Antibiotic ointment or tablets may be prescribed for some patients to control infection or inflammation

Once your symptoms have improved, if you want to start using creams, contact lenses, etc. again these should be introduced one a time, every couple of weeks. That way, if your symptoms return, you will know which product is causing your problems and can stop using it.

If your symptoms do not completely settle even after you have stopped using the problem product, you may need further consultation and examination to identify other problems, such as dry eye, that need treatment. Please ask your GP to refer you to the eye clinic or visit your local optometrist.

Contact details

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns:

Western Eye outpatient department: 020 3312 3236 (09.00 to 17.00, Monday to Friday, except bank holidays)

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf. Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department: fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net