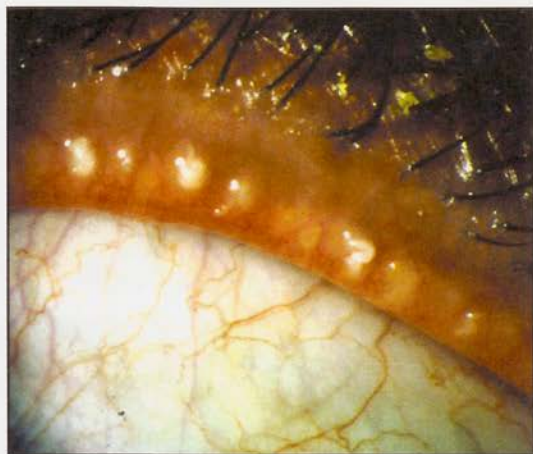


BLEPHARITIS

WHAT IS BLEPHARITIS?

Blepharitis is the medical term for inflamed eyelids. You may notice tired or gritty eyes, which may be uncomfortable in sunlight or a smoky atmosphere. They may be slightly red and feel as though there is something in them.

WHAT CAUSES BLEPHARITIS?



The eyelids have tiny glands in them, especially the lower lids.

These glands make oily substances that mix with tears and help the tears to spread across the eye. As you get older, and particularly if you have dry skin, these glands can block. Bacteria can colonise these glands and cause inflammation.

Without the oily substance that makes the tears spread the tears break up, and dry patches develop. These patches make the eyes feel sore and gritty.

Some people may be affected to the extent that they form an inflamed cyst in the lid or on the lid margin.

Severe or persistent blepharitis can occasionally lead to scarring of the eyelid. This leads to lashes growing in towards the eye, which may rub. The lashes need to be removed - there are other treatments if they are a frequent problem.



AIMS OF TREATMENT

Treatment is needed to unblock the glands in the eyelid, which may be infected and inflamed, like acne on the face or a tiny boil. You may also need to replace tears if the eyes are dry (dry eyes and blepharitis may occur together).

The treatment should make your eyes more comfortable but there is *no magic cure*.

Even with treatment your eyes may remain a little sore, but no harm will come to them and there is nothing to worry about. This is not a serious condition and there is seldom any damage to your eyes.

LID CLEANING



1. Warm Compresses

Apply a face towel dipped in warm water to closed eyes. This helps dilate the blood vessels, melt the blockages in the oil glands of the eyelids and soften crusting.

2. Massage

Firm vertical massage from the base of the eyelid toward the eye. This means the upper eyelid is massaged in a downward direction and the lower eyelid upward. Work your way across the whole width of the eyelid, spending 60 seconds for each eyelid. This expresses the secretions from the oil glands.



3. Remove Crusts

Clean the edge of the eyelids with a moist cotton bud to remove scales and debris on the edge of the eyelid. Move the cotton bud along the eyelid, using a mirror, and pulling the lid away from the eyeball with the fingers of the other hand. Rub the edge of the lid gently. Often a dilute solution of baby shampoo (a few drops of shampoo in half a glass of water) can assist with this stage. You may also use a commercial eyelid cleaning solution with a moist pad (eg Lid Care).



LID CLEANING IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT AND EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR BLEPHARITIS

Your doctor may recommend doing this twice a day to begin with. It may take several weeks to notice a difference and lid cleaning may initially make your eyes worse. **KEEP GOING** - you will not regret it. Some people find that they need to continue cleaning their lids regularly for the rest of their life, although not as often as when they start.

LUBRICANTS

Lubricants can be helpful to both assist the spread of your own tears and lubricate the eye, and replace tears if you have 'dry eyes'. There are many eye drops and gels available over the counter at a Pharmacy: eg Poly Tears, Refresh Tears, Genteal.

Gel preparations last longer than eyedrips but may temporarily blur vision.

These products are harmless: try and see if they help.



MEDICATIONS

Your doctor may prescribe Antibiotic or Steroid Ointments. Generally these are for short term use, which temporarily improves symptoms until the Lid Hygiene becomes effective.

Antibiotic tablets (eg Doxycycline, Tetracycline) may be used at a very low dose for several months. This treatment is sometimes useful if the other treatments do not work. It is particularly effective if you have a skin condition, such as acne rosacea, very dry skin, or if the edge of your eyelid stays red with many scales. Antibiotic tables are NOT suitable for everyone, particularly if you use several other tablets or have stomach problems.