



What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis, inflammation of the eyelids, is a common cause of sore, red and crusty eyelids. This is a chronic condition which can be treated but not cured.

Blepharitis and dry eyes often occur at the same time. Dry eye is simply the late manifestation of blepharitis, and treating blepharitis also will prevent, reduce or eliminate dry eye symptoms. Blepharitis usually is associated with an over growth of bacteria that live along the margins of eyelids and at the base of the eyelashes. Bacteria at the eyelid produces inflammation.

Blepharitis also is frequently associated with inflammatory conditions, such as rosacea, eczema, asthma and allergies. Blepharitis increases the risk of getting styles, conjunctivitis, and reduces cortical lens comfort.

Symptoms

- Burning or stinging eyes
- Crusty debris at the base of eyelashes
- Irritated, watery eyes
- Itchy eyelids
- Grittiness or a foreign body sensation

Depending on the severity of blepharitis, you may have some or all these symptoms, and blepharitis symptoms may be intermittent or constant. In some cases, blepharitis also causes loss of eyelashes (madarosis).

Blepharitis also is a common cause of contact lens discomfort, forcing many people to give up wearing contacts.

Eyelid hygiene is very helpful to treat and control blepharitis, but only if performed properly.

To begin, use a clean, warm compress to melt any blocked residue in the oil-secreting meibomian glands in your eyelids. Here's how:

- Wash your hands, then dampen a clean washcloth with warm (nearly hot) water.
- Place the washcloth over your closed eyelids for several minutes.
- Then gently rub your eyelid margin with the washcloth before opening your eyes. Don't press hard on your eye

Cleaning your eyelids is the next essential step. Your doctor will recommend what to use for the cleaning agent. Options include warm water, diluted baby shampoo or an over-the-counter or prescription eyelid cleanser.

When you first begin treatment, you may be instructed to do this several times daily, for about five minutes each time. Later, you might only need to apply the compress once daily or a few times a week.

It's a good idea to minimize use of eye makeup when you have blepharitis, because mascara and other makeup can interfere with eyelid and tear film health. If your doctor recommends an anti-dandruff shampoo for your scalp and eyebrows, make sure you keep the shampoo out of your eyes to avoid irritation.

Treatment

- **Eyelid scrubs.** Your eye doctor typically will recommend a daily regimen of warm compresses and lid scrubs to clean your eyelids and reduce the amount of bacteria on your lids. Cleaning agents may include prescription (Avenova), non-prescription (Ocusoft; Sterilid), or diluted baby shampoo.
- **Prescribed eye drops and/or ointments.** Topical medicines are used to destroy excess bacteria on the eyelids and may be used over a period of few days.
- **Oral antibiotics.** Often used to effectively improve the health of your tear gland over a period of months.