

Blepharitis

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common inflammation of the eyelids. It often occurs in people who have oily skin, dandruff, or dry eyes. It can begin in early childhood, and last throughout life, or it can occur later in life as an adult.

Symptoms

- Irritation
- Itching
- Red eye (sometimes)

In blepharitis, both upper and lower eyelids become coated with oily debris and bacteria near the base of the eyelashes. The eye feels sore and may become inflamed. Routine, thorough cleaning of the lid edge helps control the symptoms. Some people can form an allergy to the scales and bacteria around their lashes which can lead to more serious inflammation of other eye tissues like the cornea.

Treatment

Blepharitis may not be cured, but it can be controlled. The best treatment is using a lid compress and scrubbing twice a day.

1. Wash your hands.
2. Place a warm, moist compress over each eyelid for five minutes each day.
3. Scrub the eyelids at least once a day.
 - Fill a small glass with warm water.
 - Add three drops of baby shampoo.
 - Take a clean cotton swab or ball and soak it in the liquid.

- Gently scrub the margin of both eyelids at the base of the eyelashes to loosen any scales.
- Rinse the lid with a cotton ball soaked with cool tap water.
- Gently dry with a clean towel.
- If told to do so, apply antibiotic ointment to the base of the lashes with a cotton swab or your finger.

4. You may use artificial tears to decrease the itchy, irritated feeling of the eye.

When to Call

- If symptoms last and none of these treatments help.
- If you have any questions or concerns.

Who to Call

University Station Eye Clinic, 8 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday
(608) 263-7171

After hours, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the “eye resident on call.” Give your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is:

1-800-323-8942. Ask to be transferred to the above number.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5042