

Blepharitis

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what blepharitis is and how it is treated. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the therapist caring for you.

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What is blepharitis?

It is an inflammation of the edge of your eyelids. It is a very common cause of eye discomfort and irritation and you normally get it in both eyes. Your eyelids may become red and swollen and you can sometimes have crusting at the root of your eyelashes.

Blepharitis is a **chronic** (long-term) condition, which means you are likely to have to keep treating it to control the symptoms.

Why do I have blepharitis?

You have tiny glands (meibomian glands) behind the roots of your eyelashes. These make natural oils which are important in helping to keep your eyes moist.

Blepharitis can be like dandruff of your eyelashes. Often your meibomian glands can become blocked, inflamed and sometimes infected.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms include burning, gritty and sore eyes. Your eyelids may also become swollen and red and you may have crusting. The symptoms are usually worse in the morning. You may lose some eyelashes and sometimes styes may develop.

How do I treat my blepharitis?

You treat all types of blepharitis by:

- keeping your eyelids clean
- using warm compresses to help loosen the crusting on your eyelids and melt the oil made by your meibomian glands.

You need to use warm compresses and clean your eyelids **two times a day** to help keep them comfortable.

Warm compress and cleaning routine

Warm compresses

1. Wash your hands and take out any contact lenses.
2. Take a clean cotton wool pad and dip it in cooled boiled water that is still warm.
3. With your eyes closed, use the pad to firmly massage your top eyelid in a downwards motion from the top to the bottom, towards your eyelashes. Do the same for your lower eyelids but use an upward motion towards the lower lashes.
4. Massage along the whole of both your upper and lower lids.
5. Make sure that, as it cools, you reheat the cotton wool pad in the warm water.
6. Massage each eye for about three minutes, using a separate cotton wool pad for each eye
7. **Alternatively**, you can buy reusable heat masks/eye bags from your local pharmacy or online. You heat them in a microwave oven and place them over your eyes. You only have to heat up the masks/bags once, each time you use them.

Cleaning

1. You can buy specialised preservative-free eye cleaning lotions and lid wipes from your local pharmacy and online. Please ask your eye specialist for suggestions.
2. Using an eye cleaning wipe or some eye cleaning lotion on a clean cotton wool pad, gently rub the edge of your eyelids. This will remove the build-up of crusts or oil. Use a mirror to see what you are doing.
3. Do this on both eyes and use a clean cotton wool pad or a fresh wipe on each eye.
4. Be careful not to clean the inside of your eyelids.

Other treatments for blepharitis

Drops: Your doctor may prescribe artificial tear drops to help soothe your eyes. They may prescribe a short course of mild steroid eye drops if you also have any corneal or conjunctival inflammation.

Ointment: Your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic ointment. You rub this into the edges of your eyelids using a clean finger or a cotton wool pad. Make sure you wash your hands or use a clean cotton wool before touching the other eye.

Oral antibiotics: You may need to take antibiotic tablets if you have certain types of blepharitis. Your doctor will tell you how to take them.

Remember

Blepharitis is a chronic condition, so you will need to keep doing the warm compress and the cleaning routine long term. To begin with do it two times a day. As the symptoms improve, do it at least three times a week to prevent the symptoms from getting worse.

Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact your doctor or eye specialist who is caring for you.

Tel: **020 3299 1845**, Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm; Friday, 9am to midday.

In an emergency, contact your GP or go to your local Emergency Department (ED/A&E).

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net.