York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Anterior, Posterior Blepharitis

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

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Anterior Blepharitis

What is it?

This occurs when the eyelids become inflamed. The inflammation is a bit like skin eczema with red, scaly eyelids.

Why have I got it?

There is usually no obvious cause, but may be due to poor hygiene, dandruff, allergy, acne rosacea and occasionally lice.

Oils and other products normally produced by the eye and surrounding skin build up on the eyelashes and lid surfaces leaving debris. This results in eye irritation and a feeling of something in the eye. Sometimes a bacterial infection may develop in the debris and this increases the symptoms. It is also associated with the wearing of makeup and the failure to remove it at the end of the day.

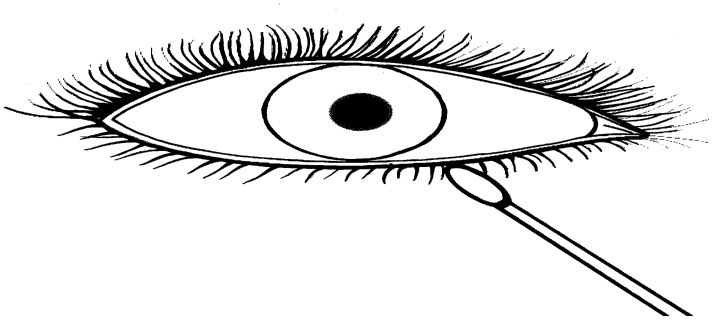
What are the symptoms?

Both eyes are usually affected maybe one more than the other but both upper and lower lids will be involved. Your eyes will feel gritty, the lids hot, red and swollen. Crusting appears at the base of the eyelashes and is often worse in the morning. The condition had episodes of improvement and worsening of the symptoms.

Lid hygiene?

- Use sterile saline sold for use with contact lenses
- Or boiled water that has cooled slightly
  Make a fresh solution each time.

Dip or spray a clean cotton bud, then using a side-to- side motion clean along the lashes on the top lid. Repeat the process for the bottom lid using a clean cotton bud. Then carry out the treatment on both the upper and lower lids of the other eye.



- Alternatively you can wrap a clean flannel around a finger and use this to scrub the eyelash roots
- Or use commercially available eye lid scrubs.

Any prescribed eye drops or ointment should be instilled after cleaning.

What to expect

This is a chronic condition and treatment is required for at least a month, often longer. This condition can recur even after treatment, in which case it should be recommenced.

Use of antibiotic ointment

If your doctor has suggested the use of antibiotic ointment this should be applied after lid cleaning for one month.

First, wash your hands. Apply a small amount of ointment to your finger and apply it gently to your eyelid margins. You may find that you are able to remove many of the scales along the eyelid margins, as you apply the ointment. Following the night application, the next morning, use a wet cotton wool ball to remove the ointment prior to cleaning the eyelids as above.

If your eyes feel particularly ‘dry’ despite treatment you may purchase artificial tears from your pharmacist without a prescription.

It may take a few weeks before you notice an improvement in your symptoms.

Posterior blepharitis and tear film dysfunction

What is it?

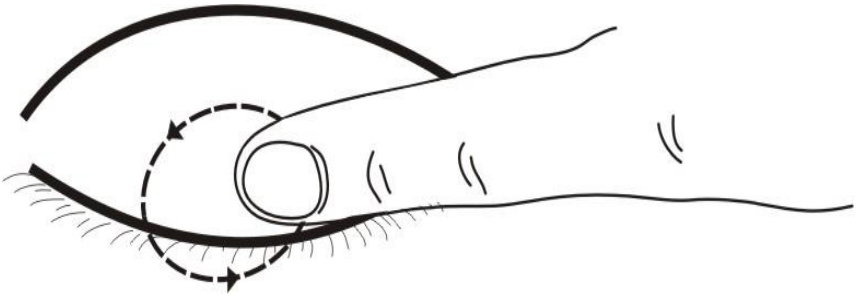
Our eyes have a layer of liquid that covers their surface; this is called the tear film. The presence of this layer is essential to help maintain the health and comfort of our eyes. The tear film is a complex layer composed of many substances. A disturbance of any of these substances may cause a lack of tears and this will lead to discomfort. This commonly occurs with inflammation of the glands in the eyelids called meibomian glands.

What are the symptoms?

People suffering from this condition often feel that their eyes are dry, hot and burning. Symptoms are often worse in the mornings. There may be episodes of blurring of vision that clears on blinking. There will be episodes of worsening and improvement. Sometimes the secretions in the gland build up to produce a lump called a meibomian cyst. These tend to go away of their own accord or with treatment as described. If not they can be surgically drained.

What is the treatment?

Bathe and gently press on the eyelids with a warm facecloth or cotton wool pads, soaked in very warm water. Carry this out for five to ten minutes, re-warming the compress when it gets cold. This softens the skin and unblocks the entrance to the glands. Next, massage the eyelids. Gently roll your finger on the eyelids in a circular action. This helps to push out any blocked oils from the glands.



Clean the eyelids wiping away any secretions. There are products available commercially that you can buy which stay warm longer and are dry. Examples include ‘Blepha EyeBag’ ‘Optase’ ‘Meibopatch’: re-usable hot compresses, which treat eyelid and eye problems.

An internet search for any of these products will give you more information. They can be bought in some pharmacies.

You may be prescribed antibiotic tablets as well and these are similar to those used in acne.

Artificial tears can be obtained from your pharmacist.

There are specialist eye drops which contain some oily substances available.

There are also oily sprays that can be sprayed onto the closed eyelids.

There are also other commercially available “lid scrubs” available from pharmacies and opticians.

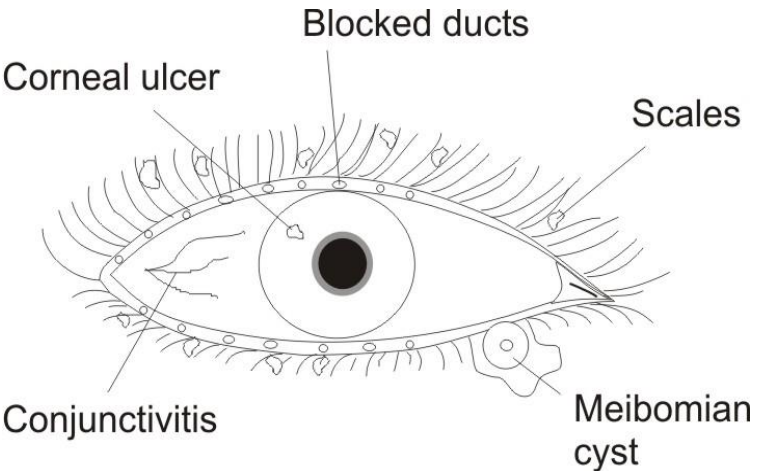
There is some evidence that a diet high in omega-3 fats may help symptoms, there are found in oily fish, nuts and vegetable oils and green leafy vegetables. Alternatively supplements containing omega-3 may be taken.

Risks and complications

Complications of these conditions include recurrent eyelid cysts, recurrent conjunctivitis, loss or misdirection of the eyelashes and corneal ulcers. These can be treated if they develop.

Most patients get some relief from treatment and develop no additional problems.

Many patients have elements of both anterior and posterior blepharitis.



Where can I find more information?

You can find more information on the NHS Choices website. Visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/blepharitis/ [Accessed 29/03/2023]



Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:
Mary Fordham, Ophthalmic Nurse Practitioner,
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726758.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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