

Blepharitis

Blepharitis is an inflammatory condition of the eyelids and lid margins or surfaces (edges). Oils and other products which are naturally secreted by the eye can build up on the lid surface and eyelashes resulting in eye irritation and redness.

Although we often use a combination of many forms of treatment (including antibiotic tablets and antibiotic ointments) the mainstay of treatment is careful cleaning of the eyelid edges and the base of the eyelashes to remove the irritating substances.

Remember blepharitis is a skin condition that may be with you for a lifetime. The treatment is aimed at minimising your symptoms and making you more comfortable. Regular eyelid hygiene should become a part of your daily routine. To obtain the best results please follow the steps listed on the next column.

Recent studies have shown that a diet high in Omega-3 fatty acids or dietary supplements, can help alleviate the symptoms of blepharitis.

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Follow this routine twice a day:

Step 1 Warm compresses

Soak a clean facecloth in water as warm as the lids can stand and then apply it to the closed lids for a period of 5–10 minutes. You may need to re-warm the cloth repeatedly. This will not only feel good but will make the lid oils easier to remove.

Step 2 Lid edge cleaning (scrubbing)

Next you need to clean the edge of your eyelid. Boil some water, allow it to cool off so that is now tepid but not cold. Dip a clean cotton-wool bud into the water and clean the eyelid margins using a gentle but firm side-to-side motion. This will remove the debris from your eyelids and eyelashes. If any debris remains – as often happens in the early days of treatment – use the cotton-wool bud to gently scrub between the lashes.

You could also use eyelid wipes which are available from pharmacies.

Step 3 Lid massage

Now gently massage your eyelids towards the base of the eyelashes and then clean the lid edges again (as in Step 2).

Application of ointment

If you have been prescribed an eye ointment, this should be applied at the end of your routine. Place a small amount of the ointment on your clean fingertips and rub it into the lid margin and lashes. At bedtime 'squeeze' 6 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch) of ointment inside the lower eyelid as well, but be warned, this will also blur your vision.

Having followed the steps described in this leaflet we would expect your symptoms to improve within 2–8 weeks of starting this routine. If you stop the routine you will probably find that your symptoms return.