

WHAT IS BLEPHARITIS?

Blepharitis (pronounced: blef-a-right-is) is a common inflammation of the eyelids. It occurs more frequently in older people.

There are two main types of blepharitis:

ANTERIOR BLEPHARITIS affects the base of the eye lashes with a dandruff-like condition. It is due to a low-grade bacterial infection of the eyelids

POSTERIOR BLEPHARITIS occurs when the oil-producing glands along the edge of the eyelid become blocked, inflamed, and/or infected. Posterior blepharitis is often associated with rosacea - an inflammatory skin condition that can lead to redness, pustules, or pimples on the cheeks and forehead. Rosacea can be made worse by sunlight, alcohol, caffeine, and eating greasy food.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BLEPHARITIS?

Common symptoms of blepharitis are:

- redness of the eyelids and eyes
- crusty discharge along the eyelids
- dandruff-like flakes in the eyelashes
- burning tears
- dry eyes (sometimes described as feeling sand in your eye)

COMPLICATIONS OF BLEPHARITIS:

Sometimes the blepharitis can lead to styes (a red tender lump along the lid margin, caused by an infection of an oil gland) or a chalazion (a firm, raised, non-tender lump in the lid that can follow a stye). When it is severe, blepharitis can occasionally cause corneal ulcers. Symptoms of a corneal ulcer are decreased vision, pain, marked redness of the eye, and tearing.

HOW IS BLEPHARITIS TREATED?

1. Please refer to Misericordia Health Centre’s “Eyelid Cleaning” patient information handout for direction on how to keep your eyelids clean.
2. Using artificial tears (non-medicated eye drops) as needed to help coat and moisturize the eye, so that they do not become dry and irritated.
3. Eating a balanced diet rich in Omega-3 fish oil and flax seeds (along with good hydration) can help manage this condition.
4. Sometimes, when blepharitis is severe, the glands along your eyelid can become infected. If infection occurs, it may be necessary to use topical antibiotic ointment. If you are prescribed antibiotic ointment, apply it as instructed on the prescription label. If you cannot apply the ointment easily you may use a cotton swab to wipe the ointment along the lower lids. As you sleep, the ointment will spread to the upper lids and cover most of the eyelid glands. The ointment is a bit sticky and greasy, but can be washed off in the morning, or as directed. The length of treatment will depend on your condition. If the symptoms are not improving with topical antibiotics, please contact your primary care provider or an optometrist to be re-assessed.

STEP 1

Wash your hands.

STEP 2

Soak a clean facecloth in warm water. With your eyes closed, hold it over your eyes for five minutes. Be sure to note which portion of the facecloth is being used on each eye, as to prevent cross-contamination.

OR

Stand under the running water in your shower, with your eyes closed.

STEP 3

Re-wet the facecloth (or wet a new facecloth), and gently massage your eyelids, with your eyes closed.

STEP 4

Wash from the inside corner of your eye towards the outside corner. Using a cotton ball, or a quilted cotton pad, clean your (closed) eyelids using:

Diluted baby shampoo (such as: Johnson's[®]). Dilute the baby shampoo with an equal volume of warm water.

OR

An over-the-counter eyelid cleaner (such as: LidCare[®] or TheraLid[®]) – following the instructions that came with the product.

With your eyes closed, rinse product off with warm water.

STEP 5

If instructed, apply ointment to your eyelids after cleaning, or when directed.

- Clean your hands.
- Apply a small amount of ointment to your finger or a cotton swab.
- Close your eyes.
- Rub the ointment along your eyelids.

Repeat the cleaning steps morning and night, or as instructed.