



What is blepharitis?

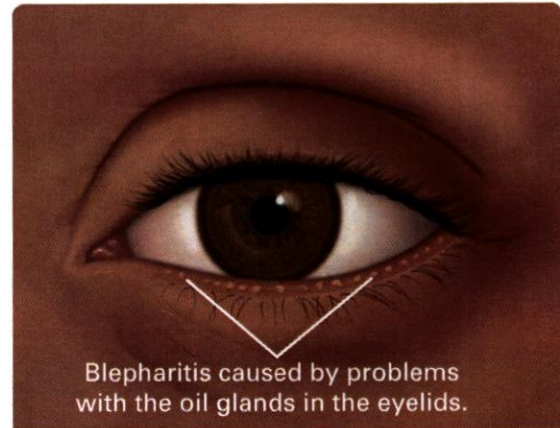
Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelids. They may appear red, swollen, or feel like they are burning or sore. You may have flakes or oily particles (crusts) wrapped at the base of your eyelashes too. Blepharitis is very common, especially among people who have oily skin, dandruff or rosacea.



With some types of blepharitis, the eyelids become coated with oily particles and bacteria near the base of the eyelashes.

What causes blepharitis?

Everyone has some bacteria on their skin. Some people, however, have more bacteria at the base of their eyelashes than other people. This can cause dandruff-like flakes to form. Also, some people have problems with oil glands in their eyelids, leading to blepharitis.



Keeping blepharitis under control

It is very important to keep your eyelids, skin and hair clean. This will help keep your blepharitis symptoms under control. Use baby shampoo diluted in warm water to gently scrub the eyelids/eyelashes daily when you have crusting present.

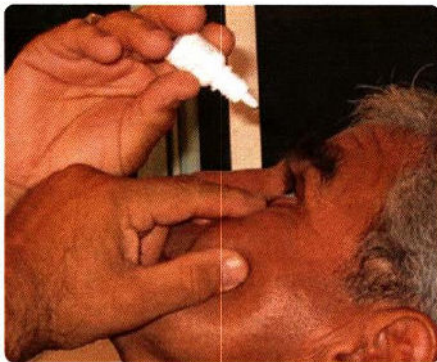
How is blepharitis treated?

Unfortunately there is not a cure for blepharitis, but there are a number of things you can do to help control the symptoms. Treatments include:

Warm compresses. Wet a clean washcloth with warm water and wring it out until somewhat dry. Place the washcloth over your closed eyes for at least 1 minute. Wet the washcloth as often as needed so it stays warm. This will help loosen the flakes sticking around your eyelashes. It also helps keep nearby oil glands from clogging.

There's also an electronic device that uses heat and massage to unclog the oil glands in your eyelids. The treatments are done in the office by your ophthalmologist.

Eyelid scrubs. Soak a washcloth, cotton swab (Q-tip) applicator, or lint-free pad in baby shampoo diluted in warm water. Then use it to gently scrub the base of your eyelashes. Scrub for about 15 seconds.



Artificial tears or steroid eye drops may help relieve redness, swelling or dry eye from blepharitis.

Antibiotics. Your ophthalmologist may have you use an antibiotic ointment on your eyes. Put a small amount of ointment on a clean fingertip or a cotton swab (Q-tip). Gently apply the ointment to the base of your eyelashes. Do this just before bedtime, or as your doctor recommends. Your doctor might also prescribe an antibiotic medicine for you to take by mouth.

Eye drops. Artificial tears or steroid eye drops may reduce redness, swelling and dry eye. Your ophthalmologist might prescribe an antibiotic eye drop to help the oil glands work better.

Skin and eyelid hygiene. It is very important to keep your eyelids, skin and hair clean. This keeps your blepharitis symptoms under control. Carefully wash your eyelashes every day with

baby shampoo. Also, wash your hair, scalp and eyebrows with an antibacterial shampoo. There are some new antiseptic sprays you can use on the skin that keep bacteria from growing too much.

Omega-3s (fish oil). Some people find relief from their symptoms with omega-3 fatty acids, which may help the oil glands in the eyelids work better. Fatty fish like salmon or sardines contain omega-3s but you can also buy fish oil pills at the drug store. Ask your doctor if they might help you.

Summary

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelids. Warm compresses and sometimes antibiotic ointment or eye drops may be used to treat blepharitis.

Blepharitis is an ongoing (chronic) condition. You can keep its symptoms under control by keeping your skin, hair and eyelids clean every day.

If you have any questions about your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. They are committed to protecting your sight.

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