

Blepharitis

Blepharitis means inflammation of the eyelids. The cause is usually bacterial, but other organisms and diseases can result in blepharitis. Depending on the extent of the blepharitis, symptoms may range from mild redness and swelling of the eyelids to painfully swollen lids with significant mucopurulent discharge. Very mild conditions can resolve without treatment, but if there is pain, or if one uses contact lenses or has had eye surgery, or if vision is affected, then medical evaluation should be sought as soon as practical.

Another similar problem involving the eyelids is known as *meibomianitis* or *meibomitis*. This condition is due to an infection or inflammation of the meibomian oil glands. Frequent symptoms in this disease are red or swollen eyelid margins, red eyes, a foreign-body sensation, or tearing and burning (the latter is particularly noticeable after taking a hot shower due to dilation and secretion from these oil glands.)

If one or two oil glands become acutely swollen a *sty* or *chalazion* can result. While *chalazia* can spontaneously resolve, many require medication or even surgery if medically unresponsive. A not uncommon association with meibomianitis is *acne rosacea*, a problem that also involves the glands of the facial skin.

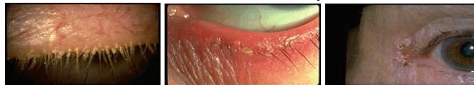
Blepharitis treatment consists of topical antibiotics and lid hygiene. If prolonged both topical and systemic medications might be required. Tobradex® eye drops and bacitracin ophthalmic ointment are frequently used.

Lid hygiene involves the use of eyelash wipes or scrubs. Sometimes this is all that is needed to rid the lids of a minor infection. These preparations are over-the-counter. OcuSoft® Plus lid scrub is good. It is available at most pharmacies and at Amazon.

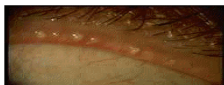
Cleansing of the eyelids may also be done using a few drops of baby shampoo diluted with warm water. Dip a Q-tip into this mixture and gently wipe your eyelashes (as if removing mascara†).

Untreated, blepharitis can result in loss of lashes, conjunctivitis or a corneal infection. In a compromised cornea, such as in a contact lens wearer, the latter problem could even result in the loss of the eye if the infection were to become a corneal ulcer.

Different forms of blepharitis



Meibomianitis



Chalazion



† If you do have an eye infection and you've been using mascara, discard the mascara as it can harbor bacteria and lead to re-infection.