

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is an inflammation of the edges of the eyelids and is commonly associated with dry eye. It is not usually serious, but may become an uncomfortable, irritating problem. Blepharitis is typically persistent and both eyes are usually affected.

What are the symptoms of blepharitis?

- Sore eyelids
- The eyes may feel gritty, itchy or as though they are burning
- The eyelids may look inflamed or greasy
- The eyes may become sticky with discharge. In particular, the eyelids may stick together in the morning
- Sometimes tiny flakes or scales appear on the eyelids, which look like small flakes of dandruff.
- Crusts may develop at the base of eyelashes

Typically, symptoms flare up from time to time, but there may be long periods without any symptoms.

What is the treatment for blepharitis?

The aim of treatment is to control or manage blepharitis, not to cure it. Most of the treatment is done by you, rather than having prescriptions or treatments from your doctor. The main treatment is **regular eyelid hygiene**. However, if your symptoms worsen

please contact your local pharmacist or doctor.

Eyelid hygiene

Eyelid hygiene consists of three parts - **warmth, massage and clean** - that should be done on a daily basis as described below:

Warmth: Warmth applied to the eyelids helps to unplug tiny eye glands that may be blocked and allow the oily secretions to flow more readily.

- The traditional method is to use a flannel soaked in very warm water to press on the eyelids gently for 5 to 10 minutes. If the flannel cools, keep re-warming it in warm water.
- A popular alternative is to use a specially designed reusable heat bag which can be bought from some opticians. The heat bags are warmed in a microwave and placed over the eyes for 5 to 10 minutes while lying down. The heat bag retains heat for longer periods hence it keeps constant warmth over the eyes.

Massage: The eyelids should be massaged immediately after applying warmth. This helps to push out the oily secretions from the tiny eye glands. Massaging should be done as described below:

- Always massage with the eyes shut
- Massage along the length of the upper and lower eyelids towards the eye. That is,

sweeping downwards when moving along the upper eyelid, and upwards when moving along the lower eyelid. The idea is that you are moving the oily secretions toward the edge of the eyelid so that they can come out of the glands

- Massaging should neither be too gentle nor too firm. It should be relatively comfortable and you should not press hard enough to actually hurt your eyeball
- Repeat this massage action 5 to 10 times over about 30 seconds

Clean: After warmth and massage, clean the eyelids to remove debris. The traditional way is to use a cotton wool bud and diluted baby shampoo as described below:

- Add a few drops of baby shampoo to a small cup of warm water such that you have 10 parts of water and 1 part of shampoo
- Dip a cotton wool bud in the resulting solution
- Squeeze out excess liquid from the cotton wool bud to prevent drips getting into your eyes
- Use the cotton wool bud to clean off any crusts at the base of the eyelids
- After cleaning, wash off the shampoo from the eyelids, using a flannel or cloth

The above routine (**warmth, massage, and clean**) should be done at least twice a day until symptoms settle. When symptoms have eased, continue the routine once a day to prevent further flare-ups. If you are prone to

blepharitis it is best to think of this as part of your daily routine. This is the best way to keep symptoms away, or to a minimum.

Contact lenses should be removed before following the routine.

Further advice

- Avoid rubbing your eyelids as this may make inflammation worse
- It is best to avoid wearing eye make-up particularly eyeliner as this may make symptoms worse



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Blepharitis

