

Blepharitis

Blepharitis is a chronic or long-term inflammation of the eyelids and eyelashes. It affects people of all ages. Among the most common causes of blepharitis are:

- A bacterial infection (often staphylococcal)
- Poor eyelid hygiene
- Excess oil produced by the glands in the eyelids
- An allergic reaction

There are two ways in which blepharitis may appear. The most common and least severe is often associated with dandruff of the scalp or skin conditions like acne. It usually appears as greasy flakes or scales around the base of the eyelashes and as a mild redness of the eyelid. It may sometimes result in a roughness of the normally smooth tissue that lines the inside of the eyelids or chalazia, which are nodules on the eyelids and can lead to poor tear function. If an acute infection occurs, a sty may occur.

Ulcerative blepharitis is a less common, but more severe condition that may be characterized by matted, hard crusts around the eyelashes, which, when removed, leave small sores that may bleed or ooze. There may also be a loss of eyelashes, distortion of the front edges of the eyelids and chronic tearing.

In cases where bacterial infection is the cause, eyelid hygiene may be combined with various antibiotics and other medications; and if the cause is an allergic reaction, the source of the reaction (eye makeup, for example) should be removed. Blepharitis is usually not serious and can often be treated easily, but if left untreated, can be very uncomfortable, unattractive and lead to more serious problems.

Directions for a Warm Soak of the Eyelids:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Moisten a clean washcloth with hot water (not scalding).
3. Close eyes and place the washcloth on eyelids for about 5 minutes. Reheat as needed.
4. Repeat at least twice daily.

Directions for an Eyelid Scrub:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Moisten a clean washcloth with hot water (not scalding hot!). No soap!
3. Wrap the washcloth around your middle and index finger and with your eyes closed, gently rub the washcloth back and forth across the eyelashes and the edge of the eyelid for approximately one minute on each eye.

Blepharitis is a chronic condition and does not clear overnight! It often takes several weeks of treatment to notice improvement. It is also important to make this routine a daily part of your hygiene.