



Blepharitis

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is when you have bacteria and oily flakes at the base of your eyelashes. Your eyelids are red, swollen, or feel like they are burning. Blepharitis is very common, especially among people who have oily skin, dandruff or dry eyes.



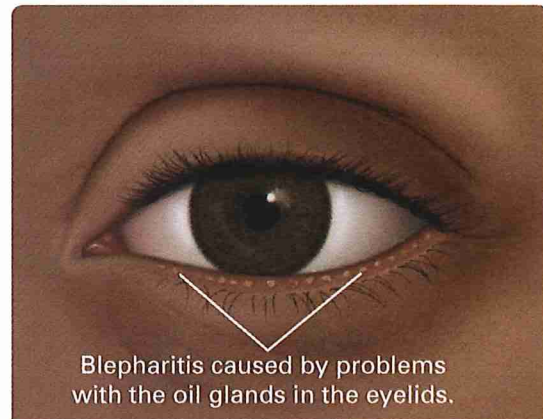
With some types of blepharitis, the eyelids become coated with oily particles and bacteria near the base of the eyelashes.

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.

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:



Blepharitis caused by problems with the oil glands in the eyelids.

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 to gently scrub the eyelids/eyelashes daily when you have crusting present.

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.

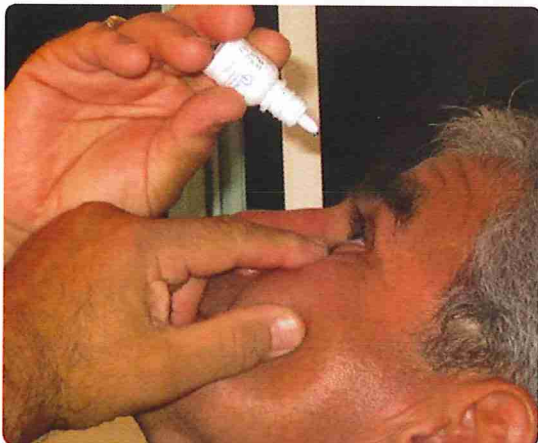
There's also an electronic device that uses heat and massage to unclog the oil glands in your eyelids. The treatments are done in the office by your ophthalmologist.

Eyelid scrubs. Soak a clean washcloth, cotton swab (Q-tip) applicator, or lint-free pad in warm

water. Then use it to gently scrub the base of your eyelashes. Scrub for about 15 seconds.

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.



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

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.

Summary

Blepharitis is a coating of bacteria and oily flakes at the base of your eyelashes. It causes swollen, red and sore eyelids. Warm compresses help loosen the flakes and help keep nearby oil glands from clogging. Sometimes antibiotic ointment or eyedrops may be used.

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. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Watch a blepharitis video from the American Academy of Ophthalmology's EyeSmart program at aao.org/blepharitis-link.

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