

Eyelid Hygiene

Why do I need to carry out Eyelid Hygiene?

You may have one of the following conditions:

- **Blepharitis** - *an inflammatory condition of the eyelid edge.*
- **Hordeolum / Stye** - *an infection at the base of an eyelash.*
- **Chalazion / Meibomian Cyst** - *a swelling in the eye lid caused by blocked eyelid glands. Chalazion will often resolve with regular Eyelid Hygiene, but may take several months: they are often associated with Blepharitis. Surgery is rarely necessary.*
- **Marginal Keratitis** - *an inflammatory condition of the cornea often caused by Blepharitis.*
- **Ocular Rosacea** - *Rosacea is a common skin disorder which can cause inflammation of the eyelids and cornea.*
- **Dry Eye** - *can be caused by many conditions, often because there is a lack of oil in the tear film, which causes the tears to evaporate from the eye too quickly.*

What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common, long term and intermittent inflammatory condition of the eyelid edges. The condition requires ongoing maintenance treatment as cure is generally not possible.

It can be linked with some skin conditions such as very oily or very flaky skin, and can cause some of the other problems on the list above if it is left untreated.

What might it look and feel like?

- Redness and swelling to the edges the eyelids.
- Burning, soreness and itching of the eyes.
- Foreign body sensation (or feeling of something in the eye).
- White, tiny scales sticking to the roots of eyelashes (seen with magnification).
- You may experience lumps in the eye lids near the eyelashes, which is caused by blocked eyelid glands.

What is the treatment?

You can help relieve the irritation and control the problem by special cleaning of the eyelid edges and lashes, known as **Eyelid Hygiene**. Eyelid Hygiene is explained below.

Depending on the condition you are diagnosed with, you may also be advised to use eye medication alongside Eyelid Hygiene.

Eyelid Hygiene Steps

1. Hot compress

Boil some water and allow it to cool slightly to prevent it from burning your skin. Whilst the water is still hot, dip a clean cloth or cotton pad into the water. Place this onto your closed eyelids for 10-15 minutes - you will need to keep reheating / dipping the compress when it cools during this time.

If you are told you have a chalazion / meibomian cyst, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommend carrying out hot compresses up to **5 times a day**. The heat from the compress helps to melt the oils in the blocked glands.

2. Lid massage

Using a clean finger or cotton bud, firmly stroke the skin of the eyelids towards the eyelashes. This will mean you stroke downwards for massaging the top eyelid and upwards for the bottom eyelid. This is to help move the oils in the glands and unblock them.

If you are told you have a chalazion/meibomian cyst you can apply a hot compress and then massage the cyst with your finger or a cotton bud, which will help the contents of the cyst drain.

3. Cleaning

Clean away any crusts and oils in the lashes and edge of the eyelids using a fresh cotton bud. To prevent infection, only use the cotton bud once, then throw this away and use a fresh one if further cleaning is required.

An alternative to hot compresses is the use of eyelid cleansing wipes, but heat is the most beneficial element in unblocking blocked eyelid glands.

How long will I need to keep doing this?

The conditions listed above are often long term conditions, and Eyelid Hygiene needs to be carried out 2-5 times a day for at least 2 weeks when your symptoms flare up. You may find that you are able to reduce how often you need to carry out Eyelid Hygiene: however, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends carrying out Eyelid Hygiene even when symptoms are well controlled to minimise the number and severity of relapses.

Chalazion / meibomian cysts can take several weeks to months to clear and will require Eyelid Hygiene for this time.

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