

Blepharitis (Sticky and Crusty Eyelids)

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Overview



Blepharitis (pronounced (blef-uh-RI-tis) is a chronic condition that causes the edge of the eyelid to become inflamed. This condition is also sometimes referred to as Meibomitis. Your lids may look red and raw and your eyelashes may be coated with greasy skin flakes. Blepharitis can be related to chronic skin conditions such as dandruff, eczema or rosacea. In some instances, it may be associated with an over-abundance of the bacteria that normally reside in you skin. Although the symptoms are uncomfortable and may be unsightly, Blepharitis does not affect your eye or eyesight.

Once you develop Blepharitis, it will always be present, but the severity may change over time. In some cases, your symptoms may go away for months or even years, before returning. It tends, however, to be a chronic condition that will wax and wane.

Symptoms

- Red eyelids
- Greasy flakes or scales around the base of the eyelashes
- Sticky eyelids that may be glued shut in the morning
- Itching, burning or irritation on the edge of the eyelid
- [Dry, irritated eyes](#)
- Tiny oil plugs on along the edge of the eyelid
- [Styes and chalazia](#) may form on your eyelids

Causes

A combination of factors can cause Blepharitis. The most common causes are excess oil produced by the skin around the eyelids. Bacteria that live on your skin can also cause Blepharitis or make it worse. In some cases, these bacteria

are "nourished" by the secretions of the oil glands in our eyelids. Some patients are unable to fight off these bacteria adequately. Less commonly, Blepharitis can also be caused by an allergic reaction or by lice.

Smoky, dry or dusty atmospheres can make symptoms worse. People who have oily skin or dandruff may be more prone to developing Blepharitis. The condition can begin in early childhood although it is much more common in older adults.

Home Treatment

Blepharitis is a chronic condition that can recur. It can be difficult to treat or control. It is crucial to keep your eyelid area clean to minimize the symptoms. Follow these directions to perform an "eyelid scrub:"

- Pour a few drops of tearless baby shampoo into a clean container (a "shot" glass for instance).
- Add about ½ ounce of warm water to make a diluted soapy solution.
- Pull your lower eyelid down and look up.
- Rub the cotton-tipped swab gently over your lashes for approximately 30 seconds.
- Then pull up your upper eyelid and look down.
- Rub the cotton-tipped swab gently over the upper lashes for approximately 30 seconds.
- By turning your eyelid away from your eye and looking in the opposite direction, it is less likely that your eye will be accidentally rubbed, which could cause discomfort.
- Do not rub the inside of the eyelids with the swabs.
- Repeat the entire process on your other eye.
- When finished, rinse your gently closed eyelids with clear water.
- Eyelid scrubs can be performed while looking in the mirror. If you cannot scrub your eyelid yourself, ask a relative or a friend to help you.

Eyelid scrubs should be performed daily for four to six weeks. After that it may not be necessary every day, but you might need to repeat this procedure intermittently for several months or even indefinitely in order to minimize the recurrence and discomfort from this chronic eye condition.

Eyelid hygiene may not improve your symptoms for several weeks. Nevertheless, strict and regular attention to eyelid hygiene usually improves the symptoms for most patients.

Using artificial tears 4-6 times a day may be needed for any associated dry eye symptoms.

If cleaning alone does not improve your symptoms, we may recommend antibiotic drops or pills

Getting your care at Kaiser Permanente

If you have mild Blepharitis, your primary care physician will manage your treatment. However if your Blepharitis becomes severe, and/or infection seems

to be the cause, your doctor will refer you to our Ophthalmology department for a consultation,

You can make an appointment with your primary care physician or an Ophthalmologist in our department by calling our call center (415) 833-2200. The call center can also put you through to an advice nurse if you need immediate advice about your eye. Our advice nurses are available 24/7.

You can also email your doctor through our web site www.kp.org. Once you have registered for a user ID, you can access your prescription information, look at your lab results, view summaries from previous doctor's visits as well as send a message to your physician.