

Chalazia and Styes (Bumps on Eyelid)

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Overview

A **stye** is an inflamed, plugged eyelid oil gland. Essentially, it is an eyelid pimple. Styes will not damage the eye, but they can be uncomfortable and often cause lid swelling and tenderness. There are no drugs, pills, ointments or drops that can make a stye go away.

A **chalazion** is a stye that did not come to a complete head. This firm, rubbery bump may stay in the eyelid for weeks to months. Most will eventually resolve on their own. A chalazion will not damage the eye. It may occasionally feel tender. No drugs, pills, ointments or drops can make a chalazion go away.

Symptoms

Stye



- Small red, tender bump on the edge of the eyelid
- The bump may grow and become more swollen
- Pain or tenderness at the site and immediate surrounding tissue
- After several days to several weeks, the stye

may break open and a tiny amount of pus may drain

Chalazion



- This is a residual stye that has not completely resolved.
- Usually painless, hard bump or cyst in the eyelid
- Some swelling may be present.

Screening and Diagnosis

In most cases, diagnosis and treatment of a chalazion or styne can be done by your Primary Care Physician by examining your eyelid. If you have had this before, you may also recognize the bump on your eyelid as a styne or chalazion without having to see your doctor.

Causes

A **styne** develops when gland openings at the edge of your eyelid become obstructed by an oil plug. This causes the gland to swell and become inflamed, often causing a red, tender bump to appear near the edge of the eyelid. Despite the redness and tenderness, the gland is usually just inflamed without any accompanying infection. A styne is essentially a pimple in your eyelid.

A **chalazion** develops from a styne that does not completely resolve. In some instances, the redness and tenderness from the styne will go away, but a pea-shaped bump or cyst may persist in the eyelid. This is a chalazion.

Certain eye and skin conditions can predispose you to getting stynes and chalazia more frequently.

- **Meibomiitis** (chronic plugging of the glands on the edge of the lid) is one such condition.
- **Blepharitis**, where one often has crusty debris or flakes that accumulate on the edge of the eyelid, is another related condition.
- Individuals with **Rosacea** also tend to get stynes and chalazia more easily.

Prevention

If you tend to get stynes or chalazia easily, apply warm compresses to your lids once or twice a day (in the shower, for instance). This can help prevent oil plugs from forming in the gland openings.

Treatment

Most stynes and chalazia **do not require a visit with us** because they will usually resolve with warm compresses applied at home. You only need to see one of us in the Ophthalmology department if the lesion does not resolve after several weeks of home treatment, and you want to have it lanced. Your Primary Care Physician can help you determine whether a referral to our department is necessary. Your Primary Care Physician can examine your lid and confirm the diagnosis if you need reassurance. You may also contact the advice nurse by phone.

Home treatment

We recommend the following treatment for both stynes and chalazia.

- **Put a warm, moist compress on your eye for about 10 minutes**, at least twice a day. Use a clean cloth or piece of gauze moistened with warm tap water. Alternatively, you can microwave a damp face cloth for about 20 seconds.
- **Make sure the towel is not too hot before you place it on your eyelid.**

- **An ideal time to use the compress is while watching TV** – you can reheat the towel if needed during a commercial break.
- Keep in mind that **hot compresses will sometimes increase swelling a little at first.**
- Always **wash your hands before and after you use a compress** or touch your eyes.
- **Do not rub your eyes and do not squeeze or try to open a stye or chalazion.** If the stye begins to drain after using the compress, you may *gently* massage lesion to expel the discharge.

When to contact our Ophthalmology department

- **Your eyelid is very painful** and the swelling and redness continue to increase despite the warm compresses.
- The bump on your eyelid persists and **you would like an office procedure** to have it drained.
- In rare instances, the tissue surrounding a stye may become infected. An infection may be developing if the swelling, tenderness, and redness continue to increase despite the warm compresses. If this occurs, you may be placed on oral and/or local antibiotics.

Getting your care at Kaiser Permanente

You can make an appointment 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.

In most cases, for a stye or chalazion, your primary care physician or provider will manage your care. However if you have multiple lumps, or develop them frequently s/he may refer you to one of our Ophthalmologists for an evaluation.