



**AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF OPHTHALMOLOGY**
The Eye M.D. Association

What Is Blepharitis?

Eyelid margin disease, or blepharitis, is a common and persistent inflammation of the eyelids. Symptoms include:

- Eye and eyelid irritation
- Itchiness of the eye
- Redness of the eye

This condition frequently occurs in people with a tendency towards oily skin, dandruff or dry eyes.

With blepharitis, both the upper and lower eyelids become coated with oily particles and bacteria near the base of the eyelashes. It may cause irritation, itchiness, redness, and stinging or burning of the eye.

What Causes Blepharitis?

Everyone has bacteria on the surface of their skin, but in some people, bacteria thrive in the skin at the base of the eyelashes. Large amounts of bacteria around the eyelashes can cause dandruff-like scales and particles to form along the lashes and eyelid margins.

Blepharitis also is associated with meibomitis — dysfunction and inflammation of the nearby oil glands of the eyelids (called meibomian glands).



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

How Is Blepharitis Treated?

Blepharitis is often a chronic condition, but it can be controlled with the following treatment:

- **Warm compresses.** Wet a clean washcloth with warm water, wring it out, and place it over your closed eyelids for at least one minute. Repeat two or three times, rewetting the washcloth as it cools. This will loosen scales and debris around your eyelashes. It also helps dilute oil secretions from nearby oil glands, preventing the development of a chalazion (pronounced kuh-LAY-zee-un) — an enlarged lump caused by clogged oil secretions in the eyelid.
- **Eyelid scrubs.** Using a clean washcloth, cotton swab or commercial lint-free pad soaked in warm water and a drop of baby shampoo, gently scrub the base of your eyelashes for about 15 seconds per eyelid. This can be done once or twice a day, and after several weeks can improve the comfort of your eyes.
- **Lubricants.** Artificial tears are available without a prescription, and range from liquids to gels to ointments. Thinner preparations should be used frequently throughout the day, up to every 1-2 hours, and thicker preparations may be used at bedtime. These can help to relieve dry eye symptoms and keep the eyes comfortable. If artificial tears are used more frequently than every two hours, a preservative-free preparation should be used.
- **Antibiotic ointment.** Your ophthalmologist (Eye M.D.) may prescribe an antibiotic ointment. Using a clean fingertip or cotton swab, gently apply a small amount at the base of the eyelashes.
- **Good hygiene.** Because blepharitis can be a persistent problem, you should practice good skin and eyelid hygiene to prevent recurrences. In addition to careful cleansing of your eyelashes, washing your hair and eyebrows with antibacterial shampoo also can help control blepharitis.

If your blepharitis symptoms persist and none of the above treatments help, contact your ophthalmologist. There are other treatments available for more severe cases.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact your ophthalmologist at:

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