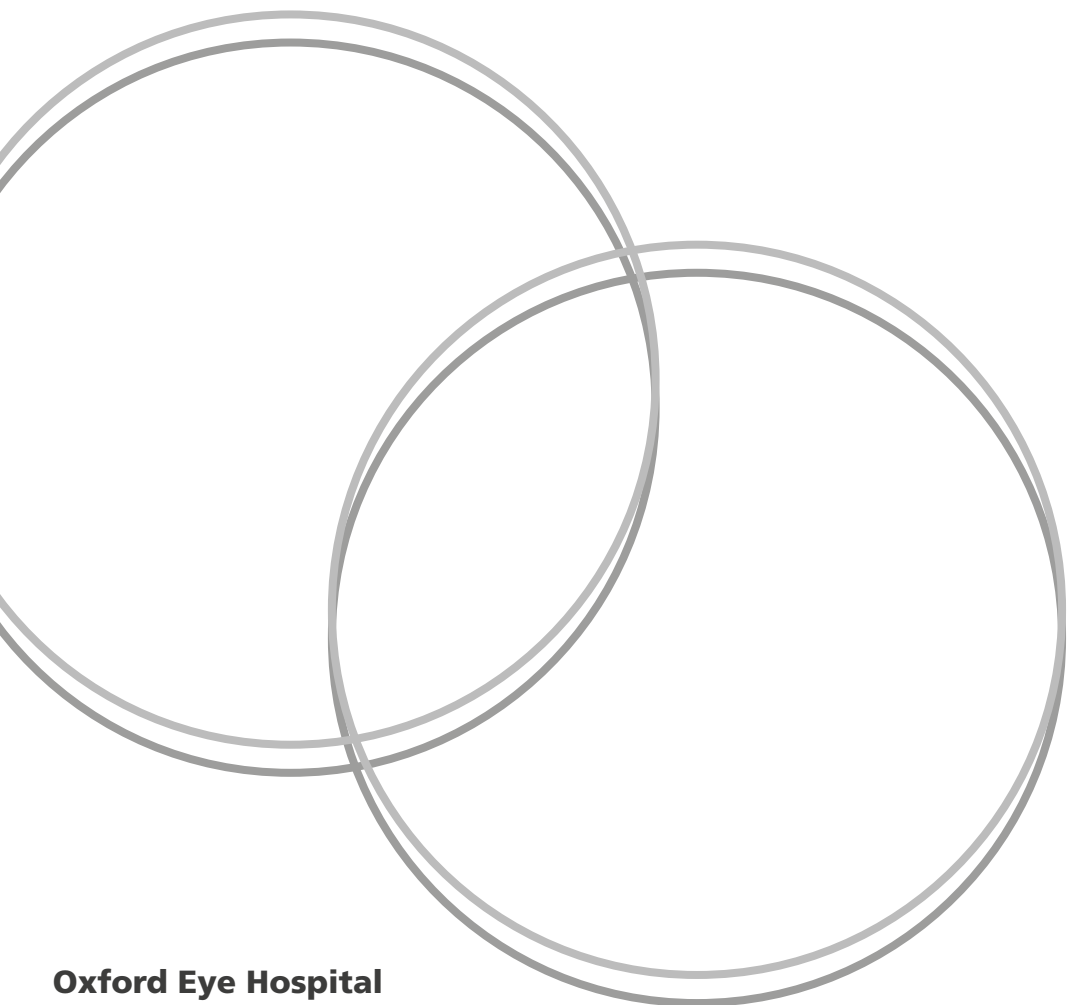




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Blepharitis

Information for patients



Oxford Eye Hospital

What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common condition that causes swelling and irritation of the eyelids and blockage of the oil-producing glands that line the eyelid.

Symptoms include:

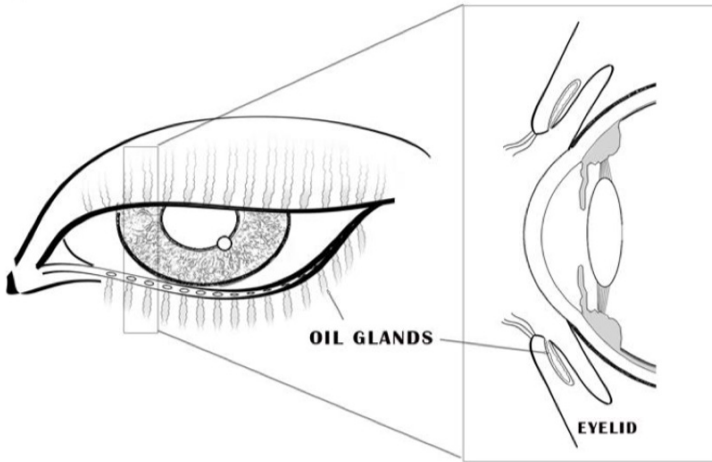
- Red rimmed, sore eyelids
- Sticky eyes on waking in the morning
- Tiny flake-like dandruff at the bottom of your eyelashes
- A dry or burning feeling in your eyes
- A gritty sensation or feeling there is something in your eyes
- Watery eyes
- Blurred vision.

The condition responds well to simple treatment (described in this leaflet) and, for most people, is not harmful. It may take more than a few sessions of treatment to control Blepharitis. It is important that you use the treatment over a long period as guided by your health professional.

What causes blepharitis?

Your eyelids contain tiny oil glands, which keep your eyes moist as part of your tears. In blepharitis these glands become clogged, or do not work well, which causes irritated eyelids and dry eyes. Common causes include excess bacteria, allergies, hormone problems (men and women), and skin conditions such as eczema or rosacea.

Figure 1



How is Blepharitis treated?

Treatment with lid hygiene

Regular treatment with eye care called 'lid hygiene' can relieve the symptoms of blepharitis and reduce how bad and how often you have flare-ups. We suggest that once a day, with clean hands, you use hot compresses and lid massage to help soften oils in the eyelid glands. This helps unblock the glands and remove the flakes and bacteria from along your eyelashes.

Step 1: Hot compresses

Hold a clean hot flannel or a clean microwaveable eye bag over your eyelids for approximately **10 minutes**. The microwaveable eye pads may provide more sustained heat over a longer period. You may put the microwaveable pads over the wet flannel to provide both heat and moisture. Be careful that the temperature is not so hot that it burns your skin (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2



Step 2: Eyelid massage

This should be done immediately after step 1. Using the edge of the flannel, or your clean finger, apply gentle pressure on your eyelids to encourage the flow of oils to the gland openings. Gently roll your finger along your eyelid towards your lashes (downward motion for upper lid, upward motion for lower lid – see figure 3 below).

Figure 3



Step 3: Clean the edges of your eyelid

You will need a good light source and mirror to aid you in this step. Moisten a cotton bud with clean tap water (figures 4 and 5) or use a lid cleaning wipe (figure 6), to clean the edges of your eyelids (these can be bought from your local pharmacy, such as Boots or Superdrug). Wipe where your eyelashes come out of the skin, and just behind your eyelashes (figures 4 and 5). To clean behind your lashes, you will need to pull your eyelid away from the eye with your finger (figure 5). You need to do this for both upper and lower lids. You may find it helpful to use a magnifying mirror under good lighting to complete this step. This wipes the globules of oil and crusts away from the openings of the glands.

Figure 4

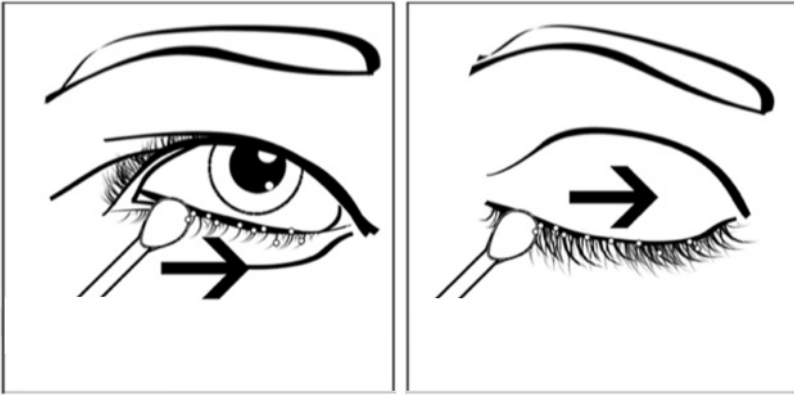


Figure 5

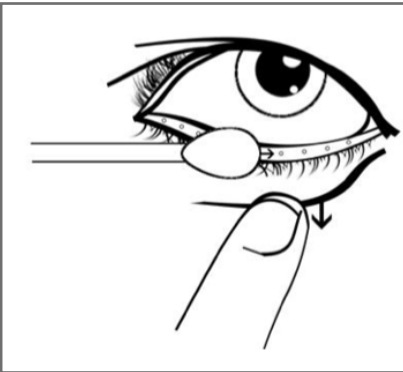


Figure 6



Other treatment options

We recommend regular use of a moisturising eyedrop (artificial tears) to supplement lid hygiene. These can be bought from your local pharmacy or prescribed by your health professional.

Your health professional may recommend a short course of antibiotic eyedrops, or anti-inflammatory eyedrops. You may be asked to take a course of antibiotic tablets, which can help reset the levels of bacteria within your eyelid.

We finally recommend making sure you eat a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids (such as oily fish, nuts, or flaxseeds) as this can help supplement the oils in your eyelids.

Complications of blepharitis

Blockage of the oil glands can lead to a meibomian cyst or chalazion, which is a painful red swelling on the eyelid. Treat this with hot compresses and gentle massage and it should settle down.

How to contact us

If you notice spreading redness or eyelid swelling, or if you develop any pain or redness on the surface of the eye itself, then please contact our eye casualty triage line at the **Oxford Eye Hospital** on **(01865) 234 567** (select **option 1**, followed by **option 1**) and we will arrange an emergency consultation.

Opening times:

Monday to Friday 08.30am to 4:30pm

Saturday and Sunday 08:30am to 3:30pm

(Including Bank Holidays)

For general advice and queries, please speak to your local pharmacist or seek advice from an optician working for the Oxfordshire Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS).

Out of hours please dial NHS 111.

Other resources

Please see our **Ophthalmology (The Oxford Eye Hospital)** page on the Trust website:

www.ouh.nhs.uk/eye-hospital/

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



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