

Blepharitis

What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis is an inflammation of the eyelids which can affect both the upper and lower eyelid margins, usually of both sides.

This can be associated with a blockage of the meibomian (oil secreting) glands in the eyelid margins.

It is a common condition which is not sight threatening and not contagious. It usually cannot be cured but can be controlled with regular treatment.

Symptoms of blepharitis

- Irritation, soreness and redness of eyelids
- Itching, grittiness, dryness or watering of eyes
- there may be crusting around the eyelashes or sticky discharge in the mornings
- recurrent styes or chalazia.

Types and causes of blepharitis

Anterior blepharitis is an inflammation affecting the skin around the base of the eyelashes and is a reaction to staphylococcus bacteria that lives harmlessly on the skin of many people. It causes the skin to be flaky and crusty.

Posterior blepharitis is where the meibomian gland openings behind the lashes become blocked and congested by debris or inflammation.

Mixed blepharitis is a combination of both and is the most common.



Anterior blepharitis



Posterior blepharitis

Treatment of blepharitis

Three Steps:

1. **Heat** Heat a face cloth with hot water, as warm as tolerated, hold over closed eyelids for 2-3 minutes to soften the secretions in the meibomian glands.
2. **Massage** the eyelids towards the lid margins, downwards for upper lids and upwards for lower lids.
3. **Eyelid cleaning** Wipe away crusts with cotton bud dipped in cool boiled water, diluted baby shampoo or diluted sodium bicarbonate or else use commercial cleaners such as Sterilid foam or lid wipes

Blepharitis is often associated with dry eyes so **artificial tear eyedrops** are useful. In some cases the eyelid inflammation is severe and needs treatment with **cortisone eye ointment** for which a prescription is required.

