

Blepharitis

WHAT IS BLEPHARITIS?

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelid margin. It is commonly a chronic condition that affects both children and adults. It is generally a benign condition but can cause frequent and annoying symptoms. Rarely, it can threaten vision when the cornea (clear structure in front of the colored iris) is involved.

WHAT CAUSES BLEPHARITIS?

The cause of blepharitis is not fully understood but is commonly associated with inflammation and overgrowth of normal bacteria on the eyelids. Blepharitis can also be associated with other skin conditions such as seborrheic dermatitis and rosacea.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BLEPHARITIS?

Chronic crusting of the eyelids is the hallmark symptoms of blepharitis. Other common symptoms include redness of the eyelid margins, chalazion (stye) formation, burning sensation, irritation, tearing and chronic redness of the eyes. Symptoms may also include blurred vision and sensitivity to light.

HOW IS BLEPHARITIS DIAGNOSED?

Only your eye doctor can diagnose blepharitis. During the examination your doctor will look for the classic signs including plugged glands on the eyelid margin (meibomian glands), crusting of the eyelid margin, and associated findings of conjunctival injection and sometimes corneal involvement.

CAN BLEPHARITIS AFFECT VISION?

Blepharitis usually does not adversely affect vision unless the corneas become involved. Inflammation of the corneas can lead to ulceration, scarring and growth of abnormal blood vessels onto the cornea.

HOW IS BLEPHARITIS TREATED?

Blepharitis is difficult to cure. The mainstay of treatment involves routine hygiene of the eyelids. Warm compresses and eyelid scrubs with a baby shampoo

solution or over the counter eyelid cleaners should be performed regularly. Sometimes chronic antibiotic ointments or systemic antibiotics are necessary. Steroid medication may be used for a short period of time if the cornea becomes inflamed. Artificial tears can provide relief if dry eye symptoms are involved. Regular intake of essential fatty acids, specifically omega-3 fatty acid, has also been recommended to manage symptoms long-term. Most patients will require chronic treatment to prevent recurrence of symptoms.

HOW ARE EYELID SCRUBS PERFORMED?

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
2. Apply mild shampoo (typically baby shampoo) or lid scrub solution to a clean cloth and work into a lather.
3. After closing the eyes, gently scrub the lashes and eyelid margin vertically and horizontally with the soapy cloth.
4. Rinse eyes and face with water.

IS BLEPHARITIS CONTAGIOUS?

There is no evidence that blepharitis can be passed from one individual to another.

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