

# Blepharitis

## Information

### What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis (Bleh-far-I-tis) is an inflammation of the eyelids causing red, sore and itchy eyelids. In some cases very small crusts or scales will form on the eyelashes. It usually affects both eyes and although uncomfortable and irritating, it generally does not cause any damage to your eyesight. Your optometrist can help you manage blepharitis with some simple and easy treatments.

### Who gets blepharitis?

Blepharitis is common, affects people of all ages and can be associated with skin conditions such as dandruff and acne rosacea. Some people confuse blepharitis with conjunctivitis because the symptoms are similar but blepharitis is not contagious.

### What causes blepharitis?

Common causes of blepharitis include skin conditions such as acne rosacea and dandruff, bacterial infection of the eyelids, ageing, the use of cosmetics and eye make-up and some medications.

### Types of blepharitis?

There are two major types of blepharitis and some people may experience both types at the same time.

Anterior blepharitis occurs at the outside front edge of the eyelid where the eyelashes are. The common causes of anterior blepharitis are skin conditions and mild bacterial infection.

Posterior blepharitis, or meibomian gland dysfunction, occurs at the inside edge of the eyelid that touches the eye's surface. The meibomian glands are responsible for secreting an oily substance that forms part of the normal tears. If the glands do not function properly, either by being blocked or with changes to the oily substance, this can cause changes to the tears and lead to inflamed eyelids.

### How does an optometrist diagnose blepharitis?

Your optometrist can check for blepharitis using a special microscope called a slitlamp to check the health of your eyelids, your tears and the surface of the eye. This enables the optometrist to diagnose the type of blepharitis present. By knowing the type and cause of blepharitis, your optometrist can start the right treatment plan for you.

### Can blepharitis be treated?

Yes. While blepharitis is commonly a chronic eye condition that requires ongoing treatment, the good news is that blepharitis can be successfully treated. In some cases, it may be as simple as ceasing to use eye make-up, but common to most treatments is the need to regularly keep the eyelids clean— just like washing your hair.

## Helpful tips

### My optometrist said I should regularly clean my eyelids. Why?

This is great advice. General eyelid hygiene is a good idea for everyone, especially those prone to blepharitis.

### Can I wear contact lenses with blepharitis?

Yes. While you may have to stop contact lens wear temporarily, once blepharitis is treated and under control you can start wearing contact lenses again.

### Will I need glasses if I have blepharitis?

No. Having blepharitis does not mean you will have to wear prescription glasses.

**Regular eye examinations are the best way to ensure good vision for life.**

## Your optometrist

