

## What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a chronic inflammation of the eyelids that usually affects both eyes. It is a very common condition and can occur in both adults and children.

## What causes blepharitis?

The exact cause of blepharitis is unknown. One of the most common causes of blepharitis is an infection of eyelids caused by a common bacterium called 'Staphylococcus'. It can also be associated with other skin conditions such as acne rosacea.

## What are the symptoms?

- a sensation of something in your eye
- itchiness
- excessive tears
- excessive blinking
- sensitivity to light
- sore or painful eyelids
- redness and thickening of eyelid margins
- dry eyes

## What is the treatment for blepharitis?

While blepharitis is an ongoing condition, the symptoms can be controlled.

Treatment consists mainly of cleaning the eyelids. Artificial teardrops which are available over the counter at your local chemist will help any symptoms from associated dry eyes. In more severe cases, you may be prescribed antibiotic drops or tablets for a period of time.

It may take weeks to months of treatment to improve your symptoms. As symptoms can reoccur, regular long term treatment is recommended.

If blepharitis is left untreated, further eye problems may occur including:

- A sty or chalazion (an inflamed or infected eyelid gland)
- Conjunctivitis
- Eyelashes turning inwards and rubbing on surface of eye



If your eyelids are itchy, do not rub or scratch them as this will worsen the inflammation. Instead, use a warm compress. Contact lenses and eye make-up can further aggravate the condition and should be avoided during treatment.

## Suggested cleaning routine

1. Wash both hands thoroughly.
2. Clean one eye at a time.
3. Apply a warm compress (eg a wash cloth soaked in warm water) to the eyelid, with your eyes closed. Gently massage or rub the edges of your eyelids for two minutes.
4. You can also dilute a few drops of baby shampoo, baking soda or an eyelid cleanser from your local chemist in warm water and drip in a cleansing pad. Work up a lather by folding over the pad and rubbing it between your fingers. Close your eye and gently rub the pad several times over the eyelid and lashes.
5. Rinse the eyelid thoroughly with warm water and dry carefully.
6. Repeat the procedure with the other eye using a clean wash cloth or cleansing pad.

The eyelid should be cleaned twice a day for three to four weeks until symptoms improve, then twice a week, to maintain eyelid hygiene. If symptoms return start daily cleaning again.

## Where can I get more information on blepharitis?

- Family doctor or optometrist
- Ophthalmologist (eye specialist)
- [www.eyelandear.org.au](http://www.eyelandear.org.au)
- [www.ranzco.edu](http://www.ranzco.edu)
- [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

