

This material will help you understand blepharitis and how you can manage it.

## What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is irritation (inflammation) of the eyelids. It can lead to problems such as dry eye.

## What causes blepharitis?

Each eyelash has an oil gland. In **blepharitis**, oil glands can become blocked. Tiny (microscopic) dandruff-like particles form along the lashes and eyelid margin. Even though the dandruff particles look big in this picture, this is just for illustration. Other people cannot see the particles. Only your eye doctor can see them using the slit lamp in the office.



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The combination of eyelash “dandruff” and the backed-up oil glands causes the eye to feel irritated. The eye needs to be lubricated by the oil in the eyelid glands. If the oil is backed up, it is not doing its job lubricating the surface of the eye. This makes the eye dry. Blepharitis frequently occurs in people who have oily skin, rosacea, dandruff, or other conditions that cause dry eye.

## People with blepharitis may have some of these common symptoms:

- Eye irritation
- Itchy eyes
- Eye or eyelid redness
- Burning eyes

- Tired eyes
- Feeling like there is something in your eye

### **How is blepharitis treated?**

- You can wash the eyelashes to remove any dandruff particles. You can do this in one of two ways:
  1. You can buy lid scrubs over the counter at the pharmacy, grocery store, or online. These scrubs help remove the particles and kill any bad bacteria:
    - Ocusoft
    - Avenova or other hypochlorous acid 0.01% sprays
  2. You can buy “no more tears” baby shampoo to make your own lid scrubs.
    - Put three drops of the baby shampoo into a glass with 3 ounces of warm water (about ½ a cup).
    - Take a clean washcloth and moisten it in your soapy solution.
    - Gently wash your eyelashes side to side with the washcloth. Close your eyes softly, as if you were sleeping, while you are washing the lashes.
    - Make a new round of soapy water each time you wash your lashes.
- You can also “melt” the backed-up oil in the eyelid glands using a warm compress at least once a day. (Your doctor may recommend using it more often.) A warm compress is just a clean washcloth heated under the hottest tap water that feels comfortable on your skin. Wring the washcloth out so it is no longer dripping wet. Leave the compress on your closed eyes for about 5-10 minutes. You may need to reheat the washcloth to keep it warm. There are also masks that can be heated in the microwave and these stay warmer longer. One good brand is Bruder. If you purchase an eye mask at a pharmacy, please follow the heating directions so you don't make it too hot.

- A more advanced treatment is IPL (Intense Pulse Light), which is done by a doctor.

### **How long should I treat blepharitis?**

If you are just starting to treat your blepharitis, follow steps 1-2 above when you wake up and before you go to bed. Do this for 2 weeks. After the 2 weeks, switch to once a day. If you stop doing this, the blepharitis may start to bother you again. Since blepharitis is like dandruff, it will never really go away completely. Sometimes it can be better, sometimes it can be worse.

Occasionally, after doing this routine you will feel like there is something in your eye. This is the oil being released from the glands and coating the surface of the eye. This is good for you. To rinse out the eye, use artificial tear drops at the end of the routine. This moisturizes the eye even more. You can also use artificial tear drops 4-6 times a day if the eye feels tired or irritated.

If this does not control your blepharitis, your eye doctor might also recommend a prescription medication such as an ointment to be applied to the eyelids or a pill to take orally.

### **Where can I learn more?**

The resources below are good sources for more information on blepharitis.

- What Is Blepharitis? (American Academy of Ophthalmology) <https://tinyurl.com/2dxz7u9u>



- Blepharitis (University of Michigan Health-Kellogg Eye Center)

<https://michmed.org/Or4KA>



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