

# Blepharitis

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

## What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is irritation of the eyelids.

## What causes blepharitis?

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



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the slit lamp in the office. Each eyelash also has an oil gland. In blepharitis, these oil glands can back up. The combination of the 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 dry eyes.

People with blepharitis may experience 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. You can buy lid scrubs over the counter at the pharmacy or grocery store.

You can also 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 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.

To “melt” the backed up oil in the eyelid margin, use a warm compress at least once a day. (Your doctor may recommend using it more often.) A warm compress is a clean washcloth that you heat under the hottest water that feels comfortable on your skin. Wring the washcloth out after you get it wet. Leave this compress on your eyes for 5 minutes. You may need to re-heat the washcloth to keep it warm for the full 5 minutes.

If you are just starting to treat your blepharitis, follow the steps above when you wake up and before you go to bed. Do this for two weeks. After the two weeks, do this only in the morning. If you stop doing this, the blepharitis may start to bother you again. Since blepharitis is like dandruff, it will never really go away. It gets better and worse but it never goes away completely.

Often times, after doing this routine in the morning 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

an artificial tear at the end of the routine. This moisturizes the eye even more. You can also use artificial tears 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 to be applied to the eyelids or taken orally.

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/blepharitis.cfm>



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/blepharitis.html>

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