

# Blepharitis (Eyelid Margin Disease)

Information for patients in Somerset



Information to supplement the advice given by your Optometrist on blepharitis and how to manage it effectively

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## What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a chronic inflammatory condition of the eyelids which causes irritation and redness of your eyes.

There are two types of blepharitis, anterior blepharitis and posterior blepharitis. Most people suffer with a degree of both.

**Anterior blepharitis** affects the lashes of the lids with characteristic build up of matter around the base of the lashes.

**Posterior blepharitis** affects the small glands that sit behind the lashes of the eye (meibomian glands). These are responsible for producing the important lipid (greasy) layer of the tears which protects the eye from drying out. With blepharitis the glands can become blocked as the fluid secreted from them gets thicker (like butter rather than oil) and this reduces the effectiveness of the tears causing irritation, soreness and often watering.

## Signs and symptoms of blepharitis

- sore red eyelids, sometimes swollen
- dandruff-like flaking and scaling on the eyelashes
- irritation often described as gritty, itchy or burning
- watery eyes
- transient blurring of vision
- eyelids sticking together

Serious complications, such as sight loss, are rare, especially when you follow this advice.

## How do I treat it?

### Lid hygiene

Lid hygiene is the most effective way to control the severity and frequency of your symptoms. It is important to try to clean the lids on a regular basis. Initially, cleaning twice a day is often necessary, however as the symptoms improve you may reduce the cleaning frequency. Be prepared to increase the frequency of cleaning if the symptoms worsen again.

### Hot compressing

Hot compressing with either a warm flannel pressed gently against the closed eyelids (bath-water temperature) or a heat pad designed for your eyes should be done for at least 6-7 minutes, ideally before you go to bed. The warmth heats up the glands to melt blockages inside and help the glands work more effectively.

If the blepharitis is caused by an infection, your Optometrist may prescribe an antibiotic ointment. Apply the antibiotic ointment onto clean eyelid skin using a clean finger or a cotton bud.

You may choose to purchase lid wipes which your Optometrist may recommend. Wipe gently along the edge of the eyelids, in amongst your lashes, and repeat about 10 times.

Gently clean your eyelids with a cotton bud. Use cooled previously boiled water with a small amount of baby shampoo or sodium bicarbonate (a teaspoon dissolved in a mug of water).