

Treating a chalazion (meibomian cyst) on your eyelid with hot compress and massage

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Patients

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What is a chalazion?

A chalazion (also known as a meibomian gland cyst) is a small lump, or cyst, on your eyelid. It is usually painless and will feel a bit firmer. It often develops over a period of time, either on the upper or lower eyelid, usually under the skin of the eyelid rather than on the edge.

What causes a chalazion?

Our eyelids are lined with lots of tiny glands, called meibomian glands, which produce oil to keep our eyes moist and healthy.

A chalazion occurs when one of these glands becomes blocked. The oil inside slowly builds up into a cyst, which appears on the eyelid as a small lump and can harden or grow over time.

How is it treated?

Chalazions are mostly harmless and should get better and eventually disappear on their own. This can take a few months. To help it disappear we recommend applying a hot compress and massage regularly to the affected eye. This will help to soften the contents of the cyst, and encourage it to drain.

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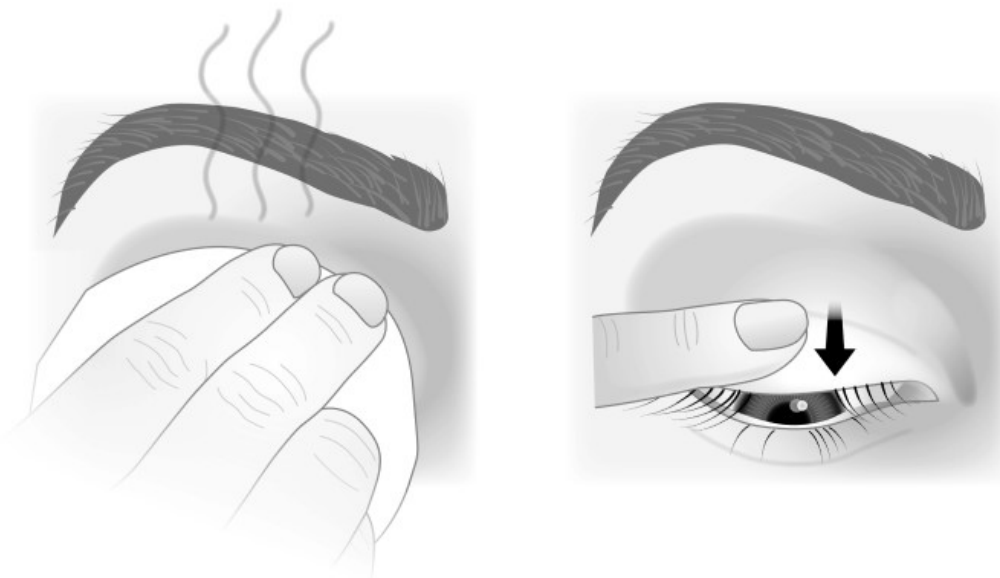
How to do warm compresses, massage and eyelid cleaning

Warm compress: This is used to soften the skin, loosen any crusts attached to the eyelids and make the thickened oil more runny.

To apply a warm compress, place a hot flannel or cotton wool pad on your closed eyelid for about 1 to 3 minutes. Or a heat eye mask or EyeBag can be purchased from your local pharmacy.

Take care that the compress is not too hot that it burns the delicate skin on your eyelid.

Important - if you wear contact lenses, you should only use water that has previously been boiled. Tap water should never be used with contact lenses. Make sure lenses are removed before beginning the routine.



Massage: Straight after applying a warm compress, massage your eyelids using your fingers or a with a warm cloth or cotton wool pad wrapped around your finger. Run the length of your finger up and down your eyelids towards your eyelashes. This will help to push the oily fluids from the glands. The massage should be firm but not uncomfortable. Always massage with your eyes shut.

Cleaning your eyelids: Simply use a clean flannel, cotton wool pad or a muslin cloth. Make it damp with warm water and wrap it around your finger. Gently wipe away excess oil and remove any crust, bacteria, dust or grime that might have built up amongst your lashes.

Repeat the above procedure twice a day until symptoms start to settle.

What other advice should I follow?

Do not:

- wear contact lenses while you have symptoms.
- use eye make-up, especially eyeliner, while you have symptoms.

Do:

- clean your eyelids at least once a day.
- continue to clean your eyes, even if your symptoms clear up.

What could happen if a chalazion is left untreated?

The lump may get bigger and the affected eyelid could get swollen, which can be uncomfortable.

What if this treatment does not work?

If the lump continues to grow and does not respond to warm compress and massage, you may need antibiotic eye drops or ointment. If antibiotics do not work, you may need a small surgical procedure called 'incision and curettage'. This is performed under local anaesthetic.

Contact details

If you have any further questions, please talk to your GP or optician.

For any urgent concerns please contact the Eye Casualty Department on 0116 258 6273.

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