

Treating inflammation of the eye (marginal keratitis)

Department of Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

Produced: December 2020

Review: December 2023

Leaflet number: 1099 Version: 2

What is marginal keratitis?

Marginal keratitis is inflammation of the cornea, which is the clear window at the front of the eye. It is usually caused by a condition called blepharitis which is inflammation in the meibomian glands in the eyelid.

The eyelids contain many tiny glands that produce oil, keeping the eye moist. In blepharitis, these glands become blocked and the eyelids become irritated and sore. Sometimes, flakes and scales build up at the base of the eyelashes.

Blepharitis is most commonly caused by sensitivity to bacteria (staphylococcus) and their toxins, which are normally found living on your skin.

See leaflet 893 - 'Blepharitis of the eyelid' which can be viewed here: www.yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/).

When the eyelashes and eyelids are swollen the eye can be affected too. The eye becomes red and sore and you may get small white ulcers around the edge of the cornea. This is called marginal keratitis.

Wearing contact lenses can further irritate the glands of the eyelids making the blepharitis worse and can make your eyes feel more dry.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Discomfort and a feeling there is something in your eye.
- Your eye is red.
- Your eye may water.
- Small white ulcers around the edges of the cornea.
- Light may hurt your eye.
- You may have an eyelid disease such as blepharitis.

What is the treatment?

Marginal keratitis is managed by self-treatment of the blepharitis, using warm compresses and careful cleaning of the eyelids (see below).

A short course of antibiotic and steroid drops may be prescribed by an eye doctor to settle the ulcers, but treatment of the blepharitis is essential for the long term to help stop the ulcers from occurring again. Some people with severe blepharitis will need a course of oral antibiotics from time to time.

• **Warm compresses:**

It is important to have good eyelid hygiene. When using warm compresses, you will need to use water that is hot, but not hot enough to burn. Soak a clean cloth or cotton wool pad (not cotton wool ball) in the water, wring out and gently press onto your closed eyelids for 2 to 3 minutes at a time. This will help melt any oily secretion blocking the openings of the glands and soften any lash flakes.

Re-usable eyelid heating devices such as gel packs or bean bags are also available from your pharmacy.

You should do this 1 to 2 times a day, even when you do not have any symptoms, to help stop the marginal keratitis from happening again.

• **Cleaning:**

To clean your affected eye, use hot water only, but not hot enough to burn. Dip a clean cloth or cotton wool pad (not cotton wool ball) into the water and clean away any crusts from the eyelashes. Use a separate cloth or pad for each eye.

You should do this 2 times a day until symptoms start to settle, then repeat once a day until cleared.

Ready-made eyelid wipes available from pharmacies can also be used for cleaning.

- **Eyelid massage:**

Massage your eyelids by gently rolling your index finger over them in small circles or running the length of your finger up and down your eyelids towards your eyelashes. This helps to push out the oil from the tiny eyelid glands.

- **Antibiotics and steroid drops or ointments:**

A course of antibiotic drops, along with steroid drops, may be prescribed to help the ulcers to heal. Your eye doctor will talk to you about whether this treatment is needed for you. This is usually for 1 to 4 weeks, but cleaning of the eyelids to treat the blepharitis needs to be done as well.

When to get advice

If your eye becomes more and more red or painful, your eyesight becomes more blurred or you see white patches getting bigger on the cornea, you should contact the Eye Casualty Department on **0116 258 6273** or go to Eye Casualty located in the Windsor Eye Clinic, Level 1, Windsor Building, Leicester Royal Infirmary:

Opening times: Monday to Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Saturday & Sunday - 8.30am to 12.30pm

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk