

Treating inflammation of the eye (marginal keratitis)

Department of Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is marginal keratitis?

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

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

Blepharitis is most often caused by sensitivity to bacteria (staphylococcus) and their toxins. They live on your skin. See 'Blepharitis of the eyelid' at:

www.yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/ (leaflet. 893)

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

Contact lenses can further irritate the glands of the eyelids. This can make the blepharitis worse. They can make your eyes feel more dry.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Discomfort and a feeling there is something in your eye
- Your eye is red

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

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- 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?

You can treat marginal keratitis yourself.

- Use warm compresses and
- clean the eyelid carefully (see below).

Your eye doctor may prescribe a short course of antibiotics and steroid drops. This is to settle the ulcers. The blepharitis needs to be treated to stop the ulcers from coming back 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 (tea towel) 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.
- You can also use re-usable eyelid heating devices such as gel packs or bean bags. You can buy these from your pharmacy.

You should do this 1 to 2 times a day, even when you do not have any symptoms. It will 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.



Do this 2 times a day until symptoms start to settle. Repeat once a day until cleared.

You can also buy ready-made eyelid wipes from pharmacies.

Eyelid massage

- Massage your eyelids by gently rolling your index finger over them in small circles or
- run 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

You may be prescribed a course of antibiotic drops, along with steroid drops to help the ulcers to heal. Your eye doctor will talk to you about if you need this treatment. It tends to be for 1 to 4 weeks, but you will need to clean eyelids to treat the blepharitis 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, call the Eye Casualty Department on **0116 258 6273** or go to Eye Casualty. It is 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

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