

# Managing lid inflammation (blepharitis) after discharge from Eye Casualty (advice for patients and GPs)

Department of Ophthalmology

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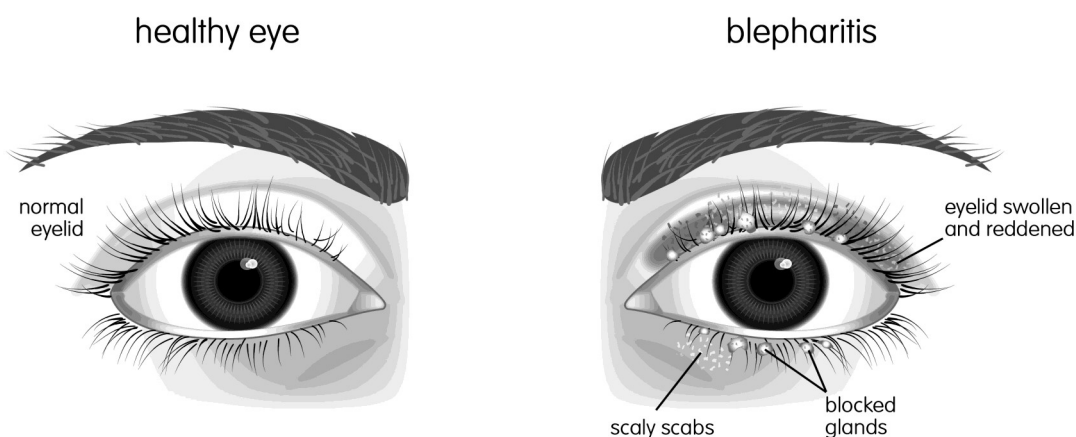
Information for Patients

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## What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis causes red, itchy and swollen rims to eyelids. It often comes and goes and can affect the upper and lower lids of both eyes. Blepharitis can affect people of all ages.



**This leaflet tells you how to manage blepharitis and when you should go to Eye Casualty**

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## **Do I need to go to the Emergency Department (Eye Casualty)?**

**In most cases no, you can manage this at home**

- Blepharitis is a self-managed condition. You have been given advice on how to manage the condition and any flare ups.
- Most blepharitis symptoms will resolve with self-management within 3 months. There is no medical treatment that will change this process.
- Itchy, dry eyes are not a reason to go to Eye Casualty. You can manage these symptoms with the advice given.
- The only time you should go to Eye Casualty is when you have red rimmed eyes, light sensitivity (photophobia), and if self-management has not improved symptoms.

## **Points to think about before coming to Eye Casualty**

1. Has the white part of the eye (conjunctiva) been red for more than 2 days?
2. Are the lids red all the way round the eye?
3. Are there swollen lumps on the lash line?
4. Have you continued treatment advised by Eye Casualty?
5. Are you using dry eye lubricants bought over the counter at least 4 times a day to help with symptoms?

**If you are not following the advice given, you need to restart and continue for 3 months. If symptoms have not resolved after 3 months of continuous treatment, you can be referred by your optician or your GP, as a routine referral.**

**If the eye is red, vision has dropped, and patient has light sensitivity (photophobia) you should go to Eye Casualty.**

## Managing blepharitis symptoms

The treatment for blepharitis is heat, massage and cleaning the lids regularly. For most people you will need to do this at least a few times each week.

Please see the table below, which shows you how to manage your blepharitis

Lid problem	Action	Managing dry eye caused by lid issue	How often per day
For crusty lashes (anterior blepharitis)	Wet flannel/cloth with hot water hold on the lashes for 2 minutes, then massage	Lubricants bought over the counter As often as needed for comfort	1 or 2 times a day
For red swollen lids (posterior blepharitis)	Heat and place mask (buy from pharmacist) on the eyes for 5 minutes, then massage top and bottom lids, then clean lash line	Lubricants bought over the counter As often as needed for comfort	1 or 2 times a day

If you have been doing the above for 3 months and symptoms have not improved you need to speak to your GP or optician. They will look at your eyes and decide if you need to come into hospital. Unless you have continuous red eye, drop in vision or light sensitivity you do not need an emergency appointment.

## Things you can do to treat and stop a flare up of blepharitis

### Do not:

- Stop treatment
- Wear contact lenses while you have symptoms
- Wear any eye make-up, especially eyeliner, while you have symptoms

### Do:

- Clean your eyelids at least once a day
- Continue the cleaning routine for your eyes even if your symptoms clear up

## What is blepharitis?

There are 2 types of blepharitis. They are linked to skin type but may be made worse by being in dusty, dry and smoky environments.

Blepharitis is caused by a blockage of oil glands (known as the meibomian glands) within the eyelids. This leads to irritation and swelling of the rims of the eyelid.

People with certain skin conditions (for example, acne, rosacea) may be more likely to get blepharitis and may need treatment for many years.

The 2 types are:

- **Anterior blepharitis** affects the lashes at the front of the eyelid. Oil collects around the base of eyelashes causing redness and itching.
- **Posterior blepharitis** affects the oil glands inside the lid. The oil becomes thick and solid which irritates the glands, causing the lid to swell and feel heavy. As the oil cannot get into the eye it can cause dry eye.

## What are the signs and symptoms of blepharitis?

- Crusting around the eyelashes
- Red, inflamed, swollen eyelids
- Discomfort, burning, itching or dry feeling in the eyes
- Watering of the eyes
- Eyelids that stick together, especially when you wake up after sleeping

You may not have all of these symptoms at the same time, and how bad the symptoms are can change constantly.

## How is blepharitis treated and what can I do?

You can reduce the symptoms by soothing the eyelids and clearing out any oil that has been stuck in the glands. You should do this as a daily routine made up of cleansing, warm compresses and massage. You will be advised which treatment you need, it may be one or both.

### **Cleaning your eyelashes (for anterior blepharitis):**

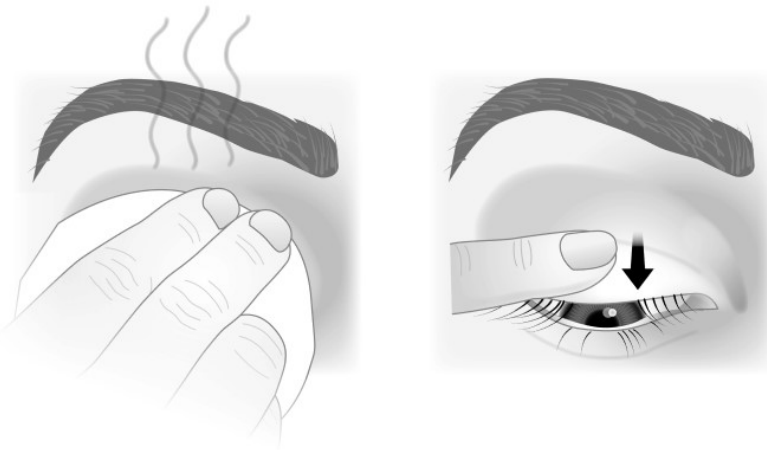
Heat should be applied to the lash line using a hot flannel or cotton wool pad. This will soften the oil stuck on the lashes. Once this has melted, the lashes can be cleaned by rubbing the lash line with the flannel or cotton pad.

If you wear contact lenses you should only use water that has previously been boiled. Make sure lenses are removed before starting your lid hygiene routine. Tap water should never be used with contact lenses.

### **Applying a heat mask (for posterior blepharitis):**

Using a heat mask helps to melt the old thick oil in the lids. When this is melted you can massage the lids to push the old oil out. This will allow new clear oil to be produced.

The heat mask should be placed on the lids for 5 minutes then removed. You then need to apply gentle pressure along the whole length of the eyelid towards the lash line. For the upper lids, apply pressure from the top of the lid to the lash line. For the lower lids, apply pressure from the bottom of the lid towards the lash line. Imagine you are squeezing toothpaste.



You will then need to clean the upper and lower rims of your eyelids (lid margins), you can use your finger to rub along the edge of the lid.

You can buy heat masks from your local pharmacy. It is the only way to apply heat for 5 minutes, a flannel or cotton pad does not keep the heat on the lid for long enough to melt the oil.

### **Important information:**

- If you wear contact lenses you should only use water that has previously been boiled. Make sure lenses are removed before starting your cleaning routine. Tap water should never be used with contact lenses.
- **The skin on your eyelid is delicate so make sure the heat mask is not so hot that it burns the skin.**



- Repeat this procedure 2 times a day for 3 months, then continue to always do your lid hygiene routine once a day as this will help to control symptoms.

## Contact details

If you have any questions, or need advise please contact us:

**Eye Casualty Department:** 0116 258 6273

Monday to - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays - 8.30am to 12.30pm

**Unless you have a drop in vision, sensitivity to light, or red eyes for longer than 3 days this is not an emergency. You need to speak to your optician, or GP.**

**They can refer you to the team who manages this condition.**

**Most symptoms are managed following the advice in this leaflet, if this treatment does not work, then we need to see you in hospital.**

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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](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

