Having a chalazion (meibomian cyst) removed from your eyelid

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is a chalazion?

A chalazion is a lump (cyst) on the eyelid that is caused by swelling (inflammation) and blockage of a tiny oil gland within the skin (the meibomian gland). A chalazion is not a stye. A stye is an infection to the eyelash hair follicle root.

What are the signs and symptoms?

An area on the upper or lower lid becomes hard and swollen over a few weeks. This may be tender and the eyelid may appear red if infected. The cyst usually gets better by itself. However the following treatment will help to resolve most of the cysts.

Treatment

Treatment involves hot compresses and massage to the affected lid.

- Use a face flannel or cotton wool pad soaked in hot water (not scalding) to apply heat to the chalazion. Apply this for 1 to 3 minutes.
- Then massage the affected area to let the cyst to release the fluid.
- Repeat this for 10 minutes, 2 times a day for at least 4 weeks.

In some cases you are left with a smaller hard lump which may take a few months to settle. If the lump is large or affecting your vision, we can do a minor operation called incision and curettage to remove it.

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What is incision and curettage?

You may need a small surgical procedure called ‘incision and curettage’. This is done under local anaesthetic. You will be awake.

- The skin is cleaned. A drop of anaesthetic is put in to the eye to numb the surface of the eye.
- Local anaesthetic is injected, with a very small needle, into the skin around the chalazion. This is painful for about 30 seconds.
- After a few minutes, once the anaesthetic has started taking effect, a small clamp is put in place and the eyelid is turned over. This will feel tight but not painful.
- A small cut is made and the contents of the cyst are scraped out.
- You will not feel any pain but you may feel some pressure.

Caring for your eye after surgery

- After the surgery, we will put an eye pad over your eye. You should keep the pad on until next morning.
- You will be given antibiotic ointments to put in the eye 3 times a day for 1 week.
- The eyelid will feel a little sore. It will be red with some lid swelling. It is fine to take a painkiller for pain or discomfort.
- Ice packs: These help to reduce lid swelling and pain and speeds up healing. The ice pack can be made by wrapping ice or packet of frozen food such as peas in a plastic bag, flannel or towel. Put the ice pack on the closed eyelid for 5 minutes every hour during the daytime for the first day after surgery, and right away after the eye pad has been removed.
- The eyelids can be cleaned of excess mucous or ointment with cool boiled water on a clean piece of cotton wool. The mucous may be blood stained. This is normal.
- Do not swim for 2 weeks after surgery. If you must swim before then, wear watertight goggles.
- You can have a bath, shower or wash your hair, but avoid soap or shampoo to the eye as you would normally do.
- You can expect to go back to work 1 or 2 days after surgery.
- Do not drive for 1 to 2 days after surgery.
- Whilst your eye is covered with the pad, it is difficult to judge steps and distance. So take extra care when moving about with the pad on.
- Do not wear any contact lenses for at least 1 week after surgery.
- You should not need a follow up appointment after the procedure.

Other problems that can happen

- The cyst can come back. This happens in less than 1 in 10 cases.
- Infection of the eyelid. If this happens you will be given antibiotics.

Information and advice after a local anaesthetic

You have had a surgical procedure under local anaesthetic. This means that the skin or tissue in the area of your operation has been numbed to let surgery to take place.

- The area may feel swollen or tight.
- Local anaesthetics work by blocking the way nerves carry pain signals to the brain. As the local anaesthetic wears off you may find that you have a tingling or burning sensation. The length of time that the local anaesthetic takes to wear off depends on what type of anaesthetic was used. It usually lasts for about 2 to 4 hours. During this time take care not to injure the area which has been numbed as you may not feel any damage.
- The local anaesthetic may also have had adrenaline. Adrenaline makes the surrounding blood vessels smaller. The area may look lighter in colour, as the anaesthetic wears off normal skin colour will come back.
- As the local anaesthetic wears off you may find it helpful to take other pain relief.

We will write to your GP and tell them that you have had this procedure.

Contact us

If you have any concerns please contact:

- Your GP
- Oculoplastic Specialist Nurse: 0116 204 7971
  Monday to Friday - 8am to 5pm
- Eye Emergency Department: 0116 258 6273
  For advice Monday to Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm
  Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays - 8.30am to 12.30pm

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