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Ingrowing eyelashes (Trichiasis)

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is trichiasis?

Trichiasis (ingrowing eyelashes) is when eyelashes grow towards the eye instead of away from it. They can rub against the surface of the eye.

What causes trichiasis?

Trichiasis can happen if the shape of the eyelid changes. This can make the eyelash turn inward.

Trichiasis is different from entropion. Entropion is when the whole eyelid turns inwards. Trichiasis affects only the eyelashes. Some people have both conditions, but this is not common. You may need treatment for both.

Injury to the eyelid can cause trichiasis mainly if the scar damages the lash roots. If the wound is not correctly aligned with normal eye lid position, then the lashes can turn in against the eyeball.

Some eyelid conditions, such as blepharitis (inflamed eyelids) or problems with the oil-producing glands in the eyelids, or a history of lots of styes or cysts can change the eyelid. Rarely, some medications can be linked with eyelashes growing in the wrong direction.

Rarely, people are born with an extra row of eyelashes. This is called distichiasis. It can cause similar symptoms.

What are the symptoms of ingrowing eyelashes?

- The eye may be red, sore, and watery.
- Your vision may be blurry.
- You may feel like there is something stuck in your eye.
- Sometimes you can get scratches or ulcers on the eye. This could affect vision.



How is trichiasis treated?

Trichiasis can be treated in different ways. It depends on the number of lashes involved and what you prefer:

- **Epilation:** If there are only 1 or 2 lashes involved it may be possible to pluck out (epilate) these lashes. It is a temporary measure as the lashes will usually regrow again (usually by about 6 weeks). It will need repeating. Our specialist nurses and some high street optometrists will be happy to do this for you if this is the preferred option.
- **Operation:** If a small area of your lid is affected by a clump of lashes it may be better to have an operation to remove that part of the lid. A lot of lashes may need a different operation.
- **Electrolysis** uses a small electrical current to destroy the root of the eyelash, so it does not grow back. Overall success rates from a course of treatment is about 80%. It is only useful when a small number of lashes are involved. You may need more than 1 treatment.

What is electrolysis?

Electrolysis uses electric current to pass into the root of the lash and stop it growing back. It is the best treatment when there are only a few ingrowing lashes along the length of the eyelid.

How is electrolysis given?

- You will lie down or sit up on a couch in the Minor Operations room.
- We put anaesthetic drops in to numb the surface of the eye.
- We clean the lid with an antiseptic solution.
- The doctor may use a microscope or magnifying glasses to find the problem lashes.
- We will inject a small amount of local anaesthetic into the eyelid where the lashes are growing inwards. This will sting for 10 to 20 seconds. The lid will then be numb.
- We will thread a fine electrolysis needle down to the lash root. The electricity is turned on. You may hear a buzzing sound. We will remove your lash. We repeat the process for each lash.
- After the procedure, we will put an antibiotic ointment in the eye. We will give you the ointment to use at home for a few days.
- You should not drive home from the hospital that day. Do not wear contact lenses until the eye feels normal again.

How well does the electrolysis work?

You are likely to need more than 1 treatment. Only lashes that can be seen can be treated. New lashes may grow through later and may need another treatment.

What are the side effects of the electrolysis?

These include some bruising, swelling and soreness in the lid. This will last a few days. You can take paracetamol or other simple painkillers if needed.

If you have a lot of eyelashes or if they grow back regularly, you may be better to have a different treatment. Having a lot of electrolysis can cause scarring and change in the shape of the eyelid. The clinical team will discuss this with you if needed.

Contact us

If you have any queries after your treatment, please contact us on these telephone numbers:

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

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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