

Ingrowing eyelashes (Trichiasis)

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is trichiasis?

Trichiasis, sometimes called ingrowing eyelashes, refers to when the eye lashes no longer point outwards but instead point inwards and rub on the eyeball.

What causes trichiasis?

Trichiasis can happen if the shape or anatomy of the eyelid changes. This can cause the direction of the eyelash to turn inward.

Trichiasis is not the same as entropion. This is when the whole lid is turned inwards rather than just the lashes. Different treatment is needed for this. It is possible to have both entropion and trichiasis at the same time but this is not common. You may need treatment for both of these conditions.

Injury to the eyelid can cause trichiasis mainly if the eyelid is too near its margin. If the wound is not correctly aligned then the end result can be that the lashes are misdirected against the eyeball.

Some eyelid conditions such as blepharitis or meibomian gland disease, or a history of lots of styes or cysts can cause altered eyelid anatomy. Rarely some medications can be linked with abnormal lash growth.

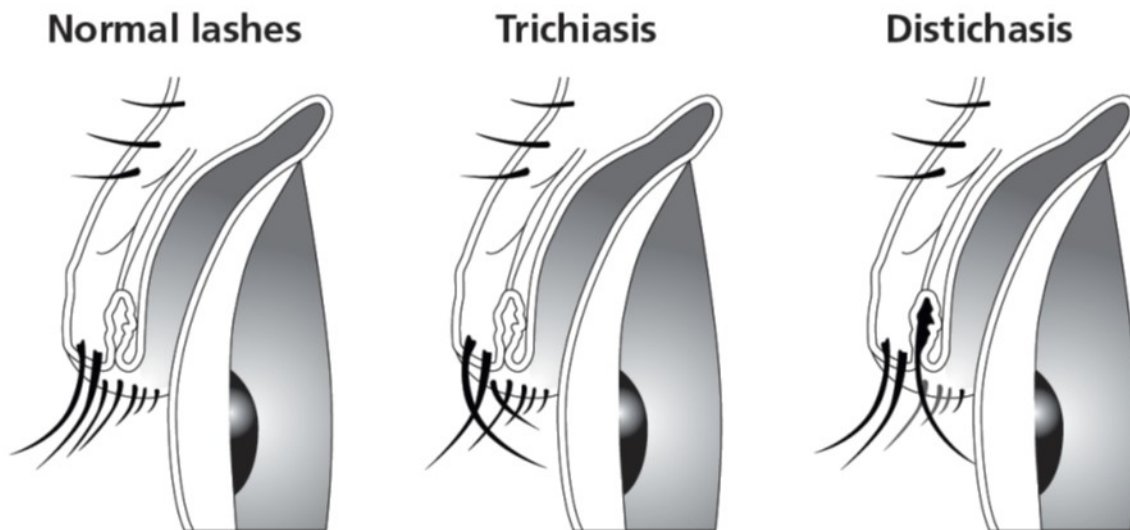
There is a rare, sometimes inherited, condition called distichiasis. With this condition, an extra row of lashes can cause similar symptoms.

What are the symptoms of ingrowing eyelashes?

- The eye may be red, sore and watery.
- Your vision may be blurred.
- You may feel like there is something stuck in your eye.
- After a while you can get ulcers on the eye. This could possibly affect vision.

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How

is trichiasis treated?

Trichiasis can be treated in different ways. It depends on the number of lashes involved and your preference.

- **Epilation:** If there are only 1 or 2 lashes involved it may be possible to pluck out these lashes. It is a temporary measure, since the lashes will usually regrow again (usually by about 6 weeks) and so 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.
- **Electrolysis:** This destroys the eyelash root follicle using a small electric current. Overall success rates from a course of treatment is about 80%. It is only useful when a small number of lashes are involved.

What is electrolysis?

Electrolysis uses electric current to pass into the root of the lash and permanently destroy it. It is a suitable 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.
- Anaesthetic drops are put in to numb the surface of the eye.
- The lid is cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
- The doctor may use a microscope or magnifying spectacles to find the problem lashes.
- A small amount of local anaesthetic is injected into the eye lid where the lashes are growing inwards. This will sting for 10 to 20 seconds. The lid will then be numb.
- A fine electrolysis needle is threaded down to the lash root and the electricity is activated. You may hear a buzzing sound. Your lash is then removed. The process is repeated for each individual lash.

- After the procedure, antibiotic ointment is put in the eye and you will be given the ointment to use at home for a few days.
- You should not drive home from the hospital that day and should 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. This is because:

- The treatment can only be used for visible lashes. New lashes that are just below the surface cannot be seen or treated. After a few weeks these may have grown out and cause irritation so further treatment is needed.
- The lashes sometimes grow again in the same area and follow up treatment may be needed.

What are the side effects of the electrolysis?

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

If you have a large number of eyelashes or if they grow back regularly, you may be better to have a different treatment because repeated and a lot of electrolysis can itself cause scarring and distortion of the eyelid.

Contact us

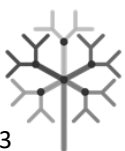
If you have any queries after your treatment, please contact us on these telephone numbers:

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

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