

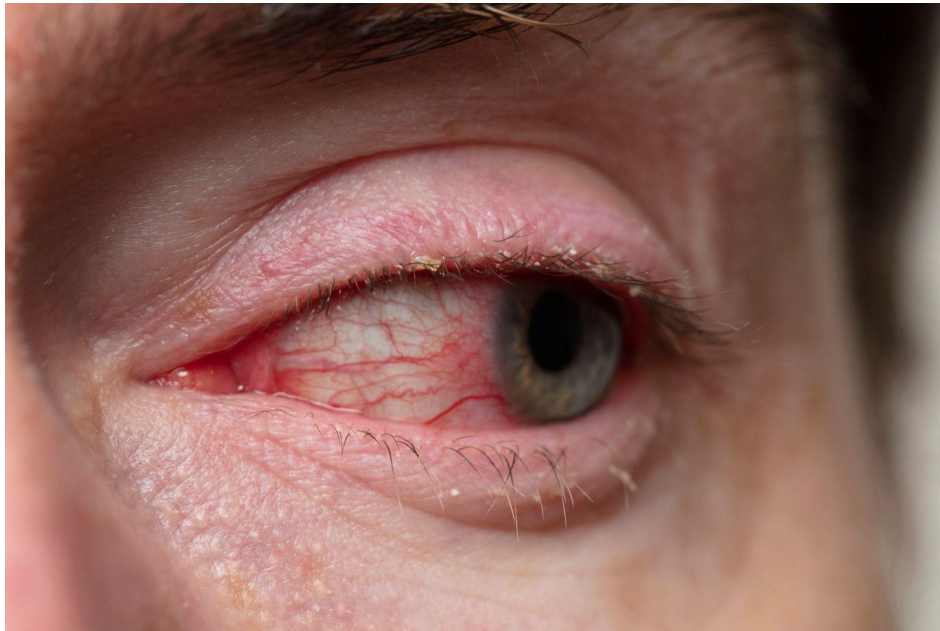


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## **Blepharitis**

### **Overview**

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelids. It is caused by bacteria on the eyelid margin and/or seborrheic dermatitis (excess oil production). The infection and excess oil production lead to inflammation, which causes irritation, dryness and redness. It is very common in the elderly and those with poor hygiene. Symptoms usually include scratchiness, itching, burning, foreign body sensation, and excess tearing. Crusty debris and flakes can be found on the eyelids around the eyelashes, especially upon waking. Sometimes the eyelids can even be stuck together upon waking. Treatment involves improving eyelid hygiene with scrubs and sometimes antibiotics.



### **Signs and Symptoms**

Symptoms include irritation, dryness, redness of the eye and eyelids and scratchiness. During an eye exam your eye doctor would notice crust/flakes on the eyelid margin, redness, concretions and poor tear film stability.

### **Causes**

Blepharitis is caused by a bacterial infection and seborrheic dermatitis. It is frequently caused by exotoxins secreted by a common bacterium called Staphylococcus. Because of the infection the glands in the eyelids secrete a poor and excessive amount of lipids into the tear film. The immune system in the eye responds to this lipid and causes an inflammatory reaction making the eye irritated and red. The

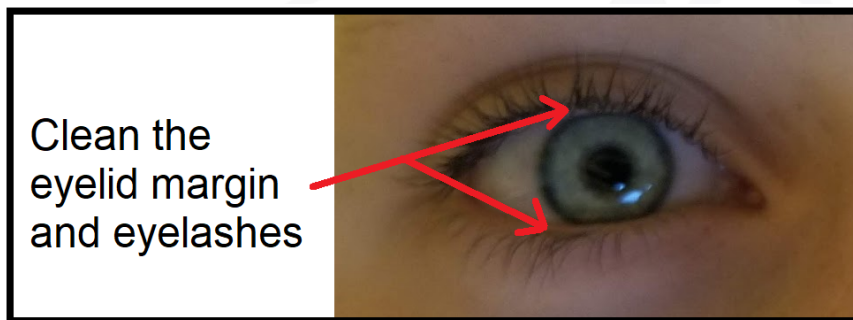
poor quality of the lipid allows for evaporation of the tear film and leads to dry eye, further complicating the irritation. If the blepharitis is not managed, the bacteria can cause recurrent styes and chalazions.

## **Testing and Evaluation**

An assessment of blepharitis is done by a visit to your eye doctor and the use of a biomicroscope. They will visually inspect the eye, eyelid and eyelid margins. Testing for dry eye includes a tear-film breakup time test and tear secretion evaluation.

## **Treatment**

Blepharitis requires long-term management and can usually be done with improved lid hygiene. This involves the use of warm compresses and lid scrubs in the morning and before bedtime. Typically, a clean, wet and warm washcloth is placed on the eyes for 4-5 minutes. This helps to loosen and dissolve any crusts/flakes and opens the pores on the eyelid margin. Next a clean washcloth that has been soaked in a solution of baby shampoo and water is used to gently clean the eyelid margin (the area where the eyelid turns in) and eyelashes. Commercial lid scrubs are also available like the ones shown below from Ocusoft.



If the above are insufficient a topical/oral antibiotic can be used to inhibit bacterial growth and in-office procedures like Blephex may be tried to return the eyelid to normal.

## **Websites**

All About Vision: <http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/blepharitis.htm>

American Optometric Association:  
<https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/blepharitis?sso=y>

National Eye Institute:  
<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/blepharitis>