

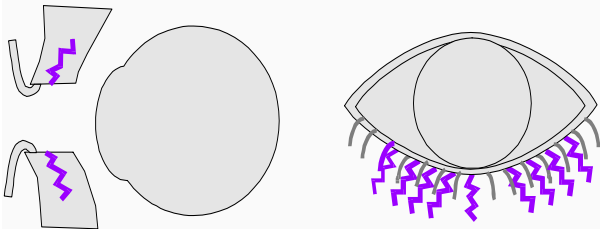
## What is blepharitis?



Blepharitis is the medical term for inflamed eyelids. You may notice tired, or gritty eyes, which may be uncomfortable in sunlight or a smoky atmosphere. They may be slightly red, and feel as though there is something in them.

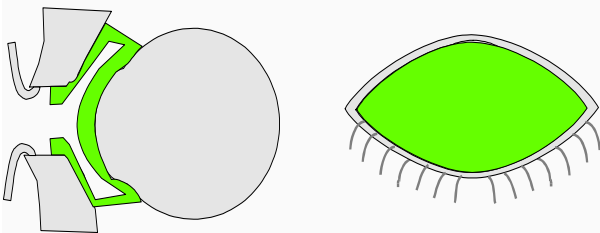
## What is the cause of blepharitis?

The eyelids have tiny glands in them, especially the lower lids. These glands make substances that mix with tears, and help the tears to spread across the eye.



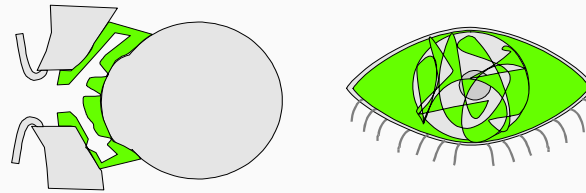
Side view of the eye and eyelids      front view

**The glands in the eyelids: glands in purple**



a thin layer of tears covers the eye

As you get older, and particularly if you have dry skin, these glands can block. Without the substance that makes the tears spread, the tears break up, and dry patches develop. These patches make the eyes feel sore or gritty.



when the glands block, the tears do not spread properly

## Aims of blepharitis treatment

Treatment is needed

- to unblock the glands in the eyelid, which may be infected and inflamed, like acne on the face or a tiny boil.
- to replace tears if the eyes are dry (dry eyes and blepharitis may occur together: see below).

The treatment should make your eyes more comfortable, but there is no magic cure. Even with treatment, your eyes may remain a little sore, but no harm will come to them and there is nothing to worry about. This is not a serious condition, and there is seldom any damage to your eyes.

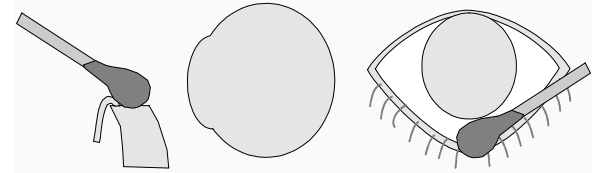
- lid cleaning
- lubricants such as 'Gel Tears' or 'Viscotears'
- antibiotic ointment if cleaning not helpful
- antibiotic tablets if severe, persistent, or very uncomfortable

*summary of treatment of blepharitis*

## The treatment of blepharitis

### 1 Lid Cleaning

- Soak some cotton wool in warm water. Rub the cotton wool over the closed eyelids for 2-3 minutes, and repeat.
- Then clean the edge of the *lower* eyelid with a cotton bud to remove scales and debris on the edge of the eyelid. Move the cotton bud along the eyelid,



using a mirror, and pulling the lid away from the eyeball with the fingers of the other hand. Rub the edge of the lid gently. The warm bathing helps to soften up the scales first. It is preferable to boil the water first to sterilise it, and allow it to cool. It may be two weeks for any improvement. Bathe 2-3 times a day, gradually reducing the frequency of bathing as the eyes become more comfortable (although bathing does not help everyone). It is safe to stop cleaning, but you may need to start again if the condition returns.

- Adding bicarbonate to the water can help. Use a teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in a pint of boiled water: this solution can be used over a week if refrigerated. Clean with a cotton bud as above.

## 2 Lubricants

Lubricants can help to both assist the spread of your own tears and lubricate the eye, and replace tears if you have 'dry eyes'.

- gels such as 'Gel Tears' or 'Viscotears' are usually helpful
- drops such as 'Sno-tears' may help.

These products are harmless: try and see if they help. You can buy them, but if you need them regularly they can be obtained on prescription.



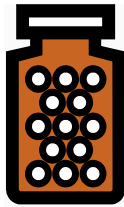
## 3 Antibiotic ointment



If the cleaning is not helpful, in addition your eyes may feel more comfortable if you use antibiotic ointment. Your GP will need to prescribe it. Try it for 3 months (chloromycetin or fucithalamic). Sometimes the condition returns once the ointment is stopped, and you may need a repeat prescription from your GP. Some people benefit using the cream intermittently.

## 4 Antibiotic tablets

This treatment is sometimes useful if the other treatments do not work. It is particularly effective if you have a skin condition, such as acne rosacea, or very dry skin, or if the edge of your eyelid stays red with many scales. Antibiotic tablets are NOT suitable for everyone, particularly if you use several other tablets or have stomach problems. You will need to discuss this treatment with your GP first.

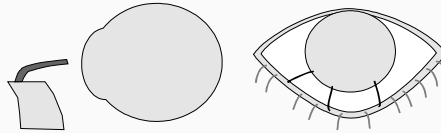


Oxytetracycline 250mg twice daily (or doxycycline 50mg once daily [or erythromycin]) is usually used for 3 months.

The benefit lasts several months after this treatment, but you may need to use further

## In-growing eye lashes

Severe or persistent blepharitis can occasionally lead to scarring of the eyelid. This leads to lashes growing



in towards the eye, which they may rub. The lashes need to be removed, and there are other treatments if they are a frequent problem. Antibiotic tablets may help to eliminate the blepharitis.

## Other causes of sore eyes

Your eyes should be checked for other conditions such as glaucoma, by an optometrist; occasionally new spectacles may make the eyes more comfortable.

You may have dry eyes (or at least poorly spreading tears) and replacement tears may help, as described.

You may have an allergy, particularly if the eyes are itchy: try Optichrom or another anti-allergy drop.

If your eyes remain red and very irritable an ophthalmologist will need to check your eyes in an Eye Clinic.

Remember, blepharitis is not serious; some people whose eyes remain sore have little medically wrong, and are in fact anxious and unduly concerned. Your GP may be able to advise.

# Blepharitis Inflamed eyelids



This leaflet explains  
blepharitis

- what you notice
- the causes
- the treatment

This leaflet is designed to be photocopied in black and white. Print out page one and two in colour.

For outpatient use is easier to photocopy than print out double sided copies. Photocopy page one, and two, as 'double sided'.

The leaflet can then be folded as shown and is easy to display. Make sure one of the pages is not upside down...this may require experimenting how pages feed into the photo copier.

