Blepharitis

This leaflet explains what blepharitis is and how it may be treated. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or orthoptist.

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelid margins. It is very common and can occur at any age.

What causes blepharitis?

- Seborrhoeic dermatitis: A condition leading to oily or flaky skin.
- Meibomian gland dysfunction: These glands in the eyelids produce oil which forms part of the tear film. They can become blocked and clogged with oil.
- A reaction to bacteria living naturally on the skin. This is not contagious.

Signs and symptoms

- Red and/or swollen eyelids
- Sticky eyelids
- Crusty, flaky skin on the eyelids
- Itchy and/or gritty feeling eyes
- Contact lens discomfort
- Light sensitivity
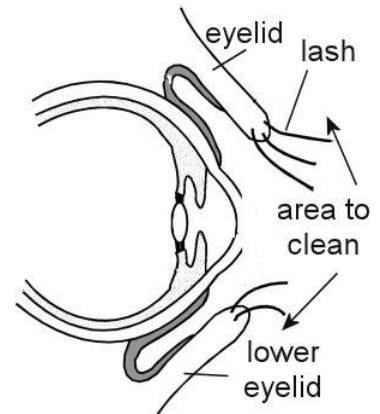- Both eyes tend to be affected.

What is the treatment?

The best treatment is keeping the eyelids and eyelashes clean using warm compresses and cleaning solutions.

- **Warm compresses:** A flannel or eye pad can be soaked in hot water and wrung out to create a warm compress. Heated eye masks are also available at pharmacies.
- **Cleaning solutions:** Cleaning solutions, eyelid scrubs and wipes can be bought at a pharmacy. Alternatively, a simple cleaning solution can be made by diluting 1 part of baby shampoo in 10 parts of warm water.

| Compassionate | Aspirational | Resourceful | Excellent |

Cleaning your eyelids

- **Warm**: Apply a warm compress over your eyes for 5-10 minutes. The heat softens clogged oils in the eyelid glands.
- **Massage**: Using a finger or cotton bud carefully massage the skin of the upper eyelid downwards and the skin of the lower eyelid upwards toward the eyelashes. This allows the release of blocked oils from the eyelid glands. If you suffer from glaucoma, be cautious of putting pressure on the eye during this time.
- **Clean**: Soak a cotton bud in cleaning solution and gently clean your eyelids and eyelashes. Use a fresh bud with each application – do not re-dip the dirty bud back into the cleaning solution. This helps to clear any flakes or debris along the eyelids/ eyelashes.
- **Rinse** your eyes thoroughly with warm water and dry with a clean cloth.
- If you have been prescribed **ointment**, apply about 1cm ($^1/_4$ inch) onto the end of a clean cotton bud and gently rub into the eyelashes at the root.

This should be done twice a day initially and can be reduced to once a day once symptoms improve.

Further treatment

Depending on the cause or severity of your blepharitis, or if symptoms fail to respond to eyelid hygiene, you may need additional treatment. You may be advised to use antibiotic eye drops or ointment, antibiotic tablets or anti-inflammatory eye drops. Blepharitis can be associated with dry eyes and lubricating eye drops can help with this.

Avoid eye make-up or use make-up that washes off easily when symptoms are severe.

Avoiding contact lens wear may also ease symptoms.

Long term treatment

Blepharitis is usually a chronic (long-term) condition that reoccurs. There is no cure but regular eyelid hygiene even during periods when there are no symptoms can help to keep it under control. In some cases, prolonged courses of antibiotics for several months may be advised.

Compassionate	Aspirational	Resourceful	Excellent

Contacting us

If you have a minor eye problem, please seek advice from your GP, optician or pharmacist. If urgent, please attend Eye Casualty or call 111.

Eye Casualty (Reading):	Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5pm; Sat & Sun & bank holidays 9am-12.30pm; Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
Eye Casualty: Prince Charles Eye Unit (Windsor):	Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5pm; Sat 8.30am-12.30pm; Closed Sun & bank holidays.
Dorrell Ward (Reading):	0118 322 7172 (24 hours a day)
Eye Day Unit (Reading):	0118 322 7123 (Mon-Fri 7am to 6pm)
Eye Day Unit (PCEU Windsor)	01753 636496 Mon-Fri 7am to 6pm)

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Compassionate	Aspirational	Resourceful	Excellent