

WHAT IS BLEPHARITIS?



Dr. Jeff Bourgerie

Blepharitis, also called granulated eyelids, is a common condition that causes inflammation of the eyelids, particularly at the lid margins. This condition may be associated with a low-grade bacterial infection or a generalized skin condition. It can be difficult to manage because it tends to recur. Blepharitis occurs in two forms:

Anterior blepharitis affects the front of the eyelid where the eyelashes are attached. It is commonly caused by bacteria or dandruff of the scalp and eyebrows. It may also be the result of allergies or an infestation of the eyelashes.

Posterior blepharitis affects the inner eyelid and is caused by problems with the oil (meibomian) glands in the eyelid which creates a favorable environment for bacterial growth. Blepharitis can also develop as a result of other skin conditions such as acne rosacea and scalp dandruff.



What are the symptoms and signs of blepharitis?

Regardless of which type of blepharitis you have, symptoms of either tearing, foreign body sensations, redness of the eye, sensitivity to light, dry eye, and crusting of the eyelashes or lids.

It is important to see your eye doctor for treatment. If your blepharitis is bacterial, possible long-term effects could occur such as: eyelash loss, thickened lid margins and or dilated and visible capillaries. Also, the lower third of the cornea may exhibit significant erosion.

Are there eye conditions associated with blepharitis?

That's a really good question. We talked earlier about skin conditions that can cause blepharitis, but most people don't realize blepharitis left untreated can lead to a:

Stye: A red tender bump on the eyelid that is caused by an acute infection of the oil glands of the eyelid.

Chalazion: This condition can follow the development of a stye. It's usually painless firm lump caused by inflammation of the oil glands of the eyelid. A chalazion can be painful and red if there is also an infection.

Problem with the tear film: Abnormal or decreased oil secretions that are part of the tear film can result in excess tearing or dry eye. Because tears are necessary to keep the cornea healthy, tear film problems can make people more at risk for corneal infections.

How is blepharitis treated?

Treatment for both forms of blepharitis involves keeping the lids clean and free of crusts. Warm compresses should be applied to the lid to loosen the crusts, followed by a light scrubbing of the eyelid with a cotton swab and a mixture of water and baby shampoo. Because blepharitis rarely goes away completely, most patients must maintain an eyelid hygiene routine for life. If the blepharitis is severe, your eye doctor may also prescribe antibiotics or steroid eyedrops.

When scalp dandruff is present, a dandruff shampoo for the hair is recommended as well. In addition to the warm compresses, patients with posterior blepharitis will need to massage their eyelids to clean the oil accumulated in the glands. Patients who also have acne rosacea should have that condition treated at the same time.

Dr. Jeff Bourgerie is an optometrist at HealthView Eye Care Center-Medford. For more information on 'blepharitis', you can contact him at (715)748-2020 or 866-748-2020.