



Scan the QR  
code to  
download



**Patient information**

# **Blepharitis in Children and Young People**

**Information for parents,  
children and young people**



**Excellent patient care, together**

## **What is blepharitis?**

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelid margins. It can cause redness, discomfort, itching, burning and crusting around the eyelashes. It is common in children and young people and often comes and goes but can affect people of all ages. Symptoms tend to be worse in the morning. It responds well to simple treatment and is not harmful for most people. Blepharitis is not contagious – it cannot be passed from one person to another.

## **Why does blepharitis happen?**

Blepharitis occurs when tiny oil glands along the eyelids become blocked. The oil usually mixes with tears to create a film over your eyes, keeping them moist and preventing dry eyes. Once the glands become blocked, it causes irritation and swelling. Children and young people with eczema, sensitive skin or allergies may be more prone to developing blepharitis. It is often linked with dry eyes, dandruff of the scalp or eyebrows, or skin conditions such as eczema and rosacea.

Blepharitis is a long-term condition but is usually very manageable with regular care. Blepharitis is not caused by poor hygiene.

## **Types of blepharitis**

Anterior blepharitis affects the base of the eyelashes and may cause flakes or crusts. Posterior blepharitis affects the oil glands (meibomian glands) within the eyelid (the part of the eyelid in contact with your eye). The oil becomes thickened which irritates the glands, causing swelling and puffiness. As a result, oil cannot get into the eye, causing dry eye. Mixed blepharitis is when both types occur together.

## **Symptoms**

- Red or swollen eyelids,
- Crusting around the eyelashes, especially in the morning,
- Gritty, watery or burning sensation,
- Eyelids sticking together,
- Blurred vision that improves with blinking,
- Sensitivity to light.

## **How can I manage blepharitis?**

Blepharitis is a long-term condition, but symptoms can be controlled with regular eyelid hygiene. Daily care is the most effective treatment. You can improve the symptoms by massaging the eyelids with warm compress and cleaning your eyelids and eyelashes, as described below.

### **Warm compress and eyelid massage**

Warm compresses help soften the blocked oil in the glands. Use a clean, warm (not hot) clean cloth and place it over the closed eyelids for five to ten minutes. This will soften the oil in the glands. Then gently massage across the entire length of eyelid towards the lash line to push the old oil out, allowing new clear oil to be made. You can buy microwaveable eye masks for warm compress from a local pharmacy or online or simply moisten a flannel/cloth with warm water (not hot). This will also remove any crust, bacteria, excess oil, or dust which could be built up between the lashes.

## **Cleaning the eyelids**

- After warming and massage, gently clean the eyelid margins using a clean cloth, lid wipe or cooled boiled water,
- Wipe from the inner corner towards the outer corner,
- A clean cloth or eyelid wipe is safer and easier to use than cotton buds,
- Special eyelid wipes or cleaning solutions are available from pharmacies and opticians; your clinician or pharmacist can advise which ones are suitable,
- Maintenance is important. At first, do the warm compress, massage and cleaning every day (often twice a day). Once things have improved, most people need to continue a few times a week to stop it coming back.

## **Treatment options**

Your eye specialist may occasionally prescribe extra treatment such as antibiotic ointment or drops, lubricating (artificial tear) drops, or short courses of anti-inflammatory eye drops. These are only used when needed and should be used exactly as prescribed. Longer-term oral antibiotics are sometimes used in older children/teenagers with meibomian gland disease or associated skin problems.

## **Preventing flare-ups**

- Continue daily eyelid hygiene even when symptoms improve.
- Encourage good hand hygiene.
- Avoid rubbing the eyes.
- Avoid smoky or dusty environments.
- Avoid eye make-up during flare-ups.

## **When to seek further medical help**

- The eye becomes very red or painful,
- Vision becomes reduced or more blurred,
- There is swelling around the eye or fever,
- Symptoms persist despite regular treatment,
- Your child becomes sensitive to light.

## **Possible complications**

In some young people, blepharitis can lead to more significant inflammation of the eye surface: blepharokeratoconjunctivitis (BKC). This needs review by an eye specialist and may require ointment, drops or longer-term treatment.

## **Important information**

- If your child wears contact lenses, remove them before doing lid cleaning. Use cooled boiled tap water or lid-cleaning wipes on the eyelids.
- Never rinse contact lenses or lens cases in tap water and do not re-insert the lenses until the eyes are comfortable.
- The skin on your eyelids is thin and delicate, so make sure warm compress is not too hot such that it could burn the skin

## How to contact us

### Ophthalmology

[Watford General Hospital](#)

Vicarage Road

Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 0HB

Hospital switchboard: 01923 244366

## PALS

If you need this leaflet in another **language, large print, Braille or audio version**, please call **01923 217198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net).



Language



Large Print



Braille



Audio

### Survey - Friends and Family Test

We welcome feedback about your care, this feedback is shared with all staff so that we can improve patients' experience. Click this [link](#), scan the QR code with your smartphone or type in: [bit.ly/4o3QVFJ](https://bit.ly/4o3QVFJ).



Author	Dr Balkrishna Ramji
Department	Ophthalmology
Ratified / review date	Feb 2026 / Feb 2029
ID number	37/2506/V1