



# Ythan Opticians

*Professional Eye Care*

## Blepharitis

### What is Blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common condition that causes inflammation of the eyelids, which can affect people of all ages. Inflammation happens when the body tries to fight an injury or infection, and the specific area tends to look swollen and sore.

The condition usually affects both eyes on the edge of the eyelids and although it is rarely serious, it can be an uncomfortable and irritating. The inflammation results in scaly and crusty eyelids. The eyes may also feel tired and gritty, or become uncomfortable in sunlight or smoky atmospheres. The eyelids may look red in people with fair skin.

Blepharitis is often associated with skin conditions such as rosacea, and eye conditions like conjunctivitis.

The condition can recur at any time and eyelids may occasionally become infected due to the inflammation which can develop into styes (hordeolum) or pustules (pus filled spots).

Blepharitis can affect your sight and, during bouts, may prevent you from driving or reading.

### Symptoms

- ▶ inflamed, greasy and sore eyelids,
- ▶ thickened and swollen eyelids,
- ▶ sticky eyelids, especially in the morning when you wake up,
- ▶ tiny flakes, scales or crusts that look like dandruff at the base of the eyelashes,
- ▶ a feeling that there is something in your eye,
- ▶ itchiness or a burning sensation,
- ▶ sensitivity to light (photophobia),
- ▶ blurred and decreased vision,
- ▶ a decrease in the production of tears,
- ▶ dry eyes,
- ▶ frothy tears,
- ▶ eyelashes growing inwards, and
- ▶ occasional loss of eyelashes and scarring of the eyelids.

### Causes

Blepharitis can affect anyone, but it is more common in older people. Although the exact cause is not known, it seems that people who have dandruff or dry skin conditions are more prone to it. Your eyelids contain tiny glands that make substances to mix with tears, which lubricate your eyes to keep them comfortable. If these glands block, you are not properly lubricated, which leads to dry patches developing on the surface of your eyes. These patches make your eyes feel sore or gritty. Some allergies can cause blepharitis. These allergies may have as a child as part of the condition known as atopy. Atopy shows itself by producing eczema, asthma or hay fever, and people with atopy may also develop blepharitis.



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## Types of the condition

There are two specific types:

- ▶ Anterior blepharitis affects the outside front of the eyelid, where the eyelashes are attached. The two most common causes of anterior blepharitis are bacteria (*Staphylococcus*) and scalp dandruff.
- ▶ Posterior blepharitis affects the inner eyelid (the moist part that makes contact with the eye), and is caused by problems with the oil glands in this part of the eyelid. Two skin disorders can cause this type of blepharitis; rosacea, which leads to red flushing and inflamed skin, and scalp dandruff.

Blepharitis can also be caused by an infection of the eyelids by the same germs that cause boils. Infections with these germs can lead to styes or small ulcers forming on the lids.

The condition has also been linked with exposure to chemical fumes, smoke and other pollutions and irritants.

## Diagnosis

The eyelid margin becomes inflamed and scales can appear on the eyelashes.

## Treatment

Blepharitis can recur at any time, although the severity of each bout may vary. Good eye care is essential at all times to stop the condition occurring again, even when the symptoms are not visible. This includes regular cleaning of lid margins with cotton buds dipped in a solution of diluted baby shampoo. Proprietary lid wipes are also available. Antibiotic tablets may be needed if antibiotic ointment or drops do not clear an infection but this only happens in rare cases.

Treating related conditions such as seborrhoeic dermatitis, which causes bad dandruff and other skin conditions of the face, such as eczema and acne rosacea, may help to ease blepharitis.

## Complications

Blepharitis is not a serious condition, and permanent damage to your eyes is rare. Severe or persistent blepharitis can occasionally lead to scarring of the eyelid, which can cause eyelashes to grow in the wrong direction, towards the eye. This can increase inflammation, and occasionally the eyelashes may need to be removed by electrolysis. Sometimes a chalazion can grow, which is an enlargement of an oil gland and has similar symptoms to a sty. Most disappear within a few months without treatment. Problems with abnormal oil secretions that are part of the tear film can result in excess tears or dry eye. Artificial tear eye drops may be prescribed.

## Prevention

Maintaining good hygiene is the most important thing to prevent blepharitis and obtaining treatment for any skin disorders, such as rosacea.