

Marginal Keratitis

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What is marginal keratitis?

Marginal keratitis is an inflammation of the cornea, the clear dome-shaped window at the front of your eye. It is usually caused by a condition called blepharitis (please see separate information leaflet on blepharitis).

What are the symptoms?

- Feeling that there is something in the eye, a foreign body sensation
- Eye pain
- Eye redness
- Watery eye
- Visible small white opacities around the edge of the cornea

What causes marginal keratitis?

People who develop marginal keratitis also commonly suffer blepharitis. Within the eyelids there are many small oil glands called meibomian glands which secrete an oily substance.

In blepharitis, the narrow opening to the meibomian glands become blocked. The oily secretions are less able to flow into the tear film which becomes deficient and the eyelids become irritated and inflamed. This causes dry, sore eyes. In blepharitis there tends to be an increased bacterial load on the eyelids. In some people, blepharitis may be

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worsened by a sensitivity to these bacteria (Staphylococcus) that normally live on the skin. The surface of the eye can also become inflamed, this results in marginal keratitis.

What are the treatment options?

1. Antibiotic drops are used to decrease the bacterial load in the eye and on the eyelids
2. Steroid drops are also often used to decrease inflammation.

Alongside treating the marginal keratitis, the underlying blepharitis must also be treated or the condition will recur.

There is no definitive cure for blepharitis but it can be successfully managed by a combination of warm compresses, massage and lid hygiene. The aim of this treatment is to encourage healthy tears to lubricate the eye and reduce eyelid inflammation.

This is achieved by:

1. **Heat treatment** which softens the oils in the eyelid glands
2. Unblocking the glands and expressing the softened oil with **massage**
3. Removing any flakes or excess bacteria with **lid hygiene**

Always wash your hands before and after touching your eyes
Make sure to remove any contact lenses.



If you have had **glaucoma surgery** in the past do not begin treatment with hot compresses and massage before talking to your glaucoma surgeon.

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Step 1. Heat treatment with a warm compress

Either

- A heated eye mask specifically for blepharitis can be purchased from your chemist, these are commonly called “eyebags”.
- The eye mask can be heated in the microwave to reach the optimum temperature.
- Place the eye mask over your eyes following the manufacturer instructions, usually for around 10 minutes.

Or

- Use a clean flannel and dip it into boiled water that has cooled to bearable temperature.
- Put the flannel over your eyelids for 5 minutes and gently massage the eyelids, this helps to reduce the swelling and encourages the glands to drain.
- The flannel will need to be reheated during this period to maintain the optimum temperature.

Step 2. Massage



Fig 1 eyelid massage with finger

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Massage should always be performed straight after Step 1. The aim is to express the softened oils from the glands, ready to be cleaned away. There are 2 separate techniques, use the one which you find easiest.

1. Use your index finger to apply pressure to the eyelid whilst slowly rolling it towards the eyelashes (Fig 1). Do this for both the upper and lower eyelids.
2. Looking in the opposite direction (eg up for the lower lid and down for the upper lid) pinch the eyelid between your forefinger and thumb applying pressure between them.

Step 3. Lid Hygiene



Fig 2 cleaning the bases of the eyelashes with a cotton bud

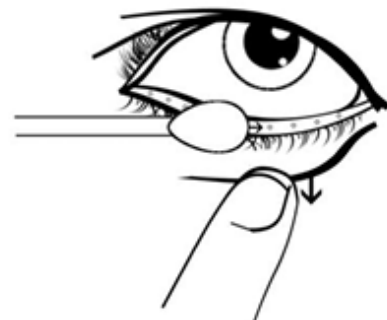


Fig 3 cleaning the eyelid margin behind the eyelashes with a cotton bud

- Use a cotton bud moistened with cooled boiled water
- Aim to clean both where the eyelashes come out of the skin (Fig 2) and the horizontal part of the eyelid margin behind the eyelashes (Fig 3) well with a gentle rubbing action
- To do this effectively you will need to pull the eyelid away from your eye with your finger (Fig 3).
- This aim is to remove any flakes or crusting from the base of the eyelashes, as well as cleaning away excess oils and bacteria.

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- Rather than using cooled boiled water you may prefer a blepharitis treatment solution or specifically designed eyelid wipes (Fig 4) which may be more effective and can be purchased from your chemist.
- Although it has been used as a treatment historically, it is **not** recommended to use baby shampoo



Fig 4 cleaning the eyelid margin with eyelid wipes

How often will I need to clean my lids?

Continue with this treatment twice daily for two weeks, then once daily for a further two weeks. After that clean your eyelids two or three times a week even when the symptoms are not there, to reduce the severity and frequency of flare-ups. Blepharitis is a chronic condition so if you stop regular treatment it is likely to recur.

When to seek advice

- If your eye becomes increasingly red and painful
- Vision becomes worse
- The white patches on the cornea are getting bigger

How do I contact the hospital?

If you require advice please telephone the Ophthalmic Outpatient Department between 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 01423 542217.

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Further Information

Other sources of useful information can be found at:

NHS www.nhs.co.uk

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust website www.hdft.nhs.uk

National Eye Institute <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/>

Feedback

If you have a concern, complaint or compliment, or would like to provide feedback regarding your experience of the Ophthalmology Service / clinic, please contact the Patient Experience Team via the following:

Patient Experience helpline 01423 555499 (Monday – Friday 9.30am – 4pm)

E-mail: hdft.patientexperience@nhs.net

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