

## Meibomian cyst (Chalazion)

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.

### What is a chalazion?

Within the eyelids there are many small oil glands called meibomian glands (Fig 1). These secrete an oily substance which is vital for the health of your tears and your eye. A chalazion is a harmless cyst caused by a blocked meibomian gland in the eyelid (Fig 2). Once the gland is blocked, the oily secretions build up within the gland. This looks like a small lump in the eyelid.

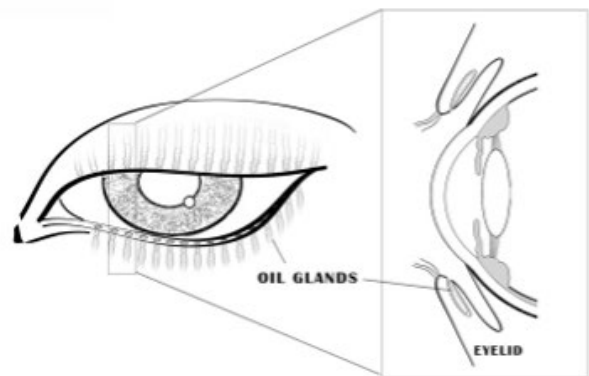


Fig 1 Anatomy of eyelid and oil glands

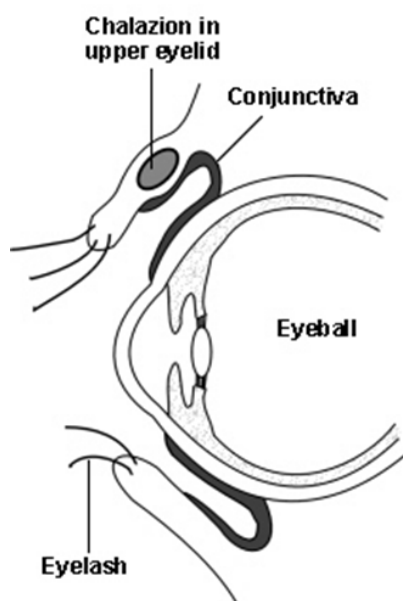


Fig 2 a chalazion in the upper eyelid

### What causes a chalazion?

A chalazion commonly occurs due to inflammation at the openings of the oil glands at the base of the eyelashes. This condition is called blepharitis (see separate information leaflet). This inflammation can be caused by a sensitivity to a common bacteria that is normally found on your skin (staphylococcus). Other risk factors include various skin conditions such as very dry or very oily skin, eczema, rosacea or dermatitis.

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### What are the symptoms?

- A small lump which develops on the eyelid.
- Mild pain or irritation may occur, particularly at the beginning.
- A chalazion may become infected causing the surrounding eyelid to become painful, swollen and red.
- Vision is not usually affected.
- A chalazion tends to last only a few weeks and is typically not painful.

### Treatment

Most chalazia tend to clear up on their own over a period of a few weeks and there are simple treatments at home which can promote healing. This includes warm compresses and massage.

### Warm compress

To do this, hold a clean flannel that has been in hot water gently but firmly against the closed eye for 5-10 minutes, 3-4 times a day. The water should be hot but comfortable and not scalding.

### Massage

Starting above the chalazion, gently massage the upper lid downwards to the lashes. The lower lid should be massaged upwards towards the lashes. This may release the contents of the cyst, which means further treatment will not be necessary.

The warmth of the compress and slight pressure from massage is often enough to soften the contents of the fluid-filled swelling, helping it drain to the ducts more easily.



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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### Eyedrops and antibiotics

Chalazion treatment with over the counter products may also be recommended by your doctor or pharmacist. This may include chalazion eye drops, ointments and solutions to prevent infection occurring, alleviate any irritation and promote faster healing. Sometimes the chalazion may cause a spreading infection along the eyelid, which might need a course of antibiotics to be taken by mouth.

### Surgery

Persistent and large chalazia can be drained with a small surgical procedure.

### Benefits

The inflamed chalazion will be drained.

### Risks

- Your eyelid might be **swollen** and **bruised** for several days after your operation but this should settle after two weeks.
- **Infection:** there is a small risk of infection, but you are given antibiotic ointment after the procedure which should help to prevent infection.
- **Recurrence:** even after removal of the chalazion, the gland can become blocked again. This can cause a recurrence of the chalazion. If this happens begin warm compresses and massage again. If it persists, seek medical attention.

### The Procedure

Once you are lying comfortably on the operating table, the skin around the chalazion will be injected with local anaesthetic. This will sting at first but the lid will soon become numb. Although you will still be able to feel touch and pressure you should not feel any sharp pain.

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The eyelid is turned outwards with a small clamp (see Fig 3) and a small incision is made over the lump on the inside of the eyelid before the contents are removed. Ointment will be applied and a pad placed over your eye.

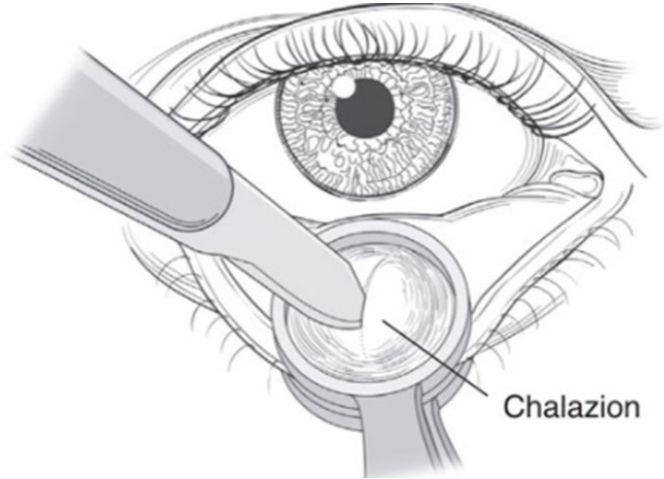


Fig 3 Surgical drainage of a chalazion

You will be able to go home on the same day.

### Biopsy

If you repeatedly suffer chalazions, your surgeon may send a small piece of tissue away to the laboratory to be looked at under a microscope for any signs of a serious medical condition, such as cancer.

### Aftercare

As a pad is placed over your eye, please do not drive yourself home after the procedure and make prior arrangements for your return journey.

When the anaesthetic wears off, there may be some discomfort. To relieve this, you can take mild pain relief such as paracetamol. You should keep the pad over the eye for at least four hours as this reduces swelling and bruising. When you remove the pad, you will find some blood or discharge around your eye. Clean the eyelid with cooled boiled water and remember to use the antibiotic ointment as prescribed.

As this is a minor procedure which only involves surgery on the eyelid and not the eye, it should not affect your ability to work.

Most patients do not require an additional follow up after this procedure as the success rate is high.

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**However, if you develop significant pain or if the eyelid becomes very swollen or red, please contact us for medical attention as you may have developed an infection (see below for contact information).**

### Consent

You will be asked to give your consent to this treatment following discussion with your doctor. It is important that you understand what is involved and you will have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have.

### Training

We are a training unit for future ophthalmic surgeons. Some or all of your surgery may be carried out by a surgeon in training under the direct supervision of a consultant who specialises in eyelid surgery.

### Chalazia in children

Most cysts disappear with time but can take weeks and sometimes, many months, to go away. They are normally harmless and can be safely left to get better with time in most cases.

Symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of chalazion is similar in adults and in children.

Seek further medical advice if your child experiences:

- Increasing redness and soreness of the eye itself
- Very blurred vision
- Very noticeable and spreading redness together with a lot of swelling of the eyelid which may signal infection

Occasionally, the doctor will prescribe a short course of antibiotic ointment or drops to help any irritation and, if there is infection spreading from the chalazion, antibiotics by mouth.

However, medication does not cause the cysts to disappear. If there is a large cyst which remains for a long time, it is possible to perform surgery to remove it. This will require a general anaesthetic.

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In most cases, chalazion surgery in children is not medically necessary or recommended.

### How do I contact the hospital?

If you require URGENT advice following the procedure please telephone the Ophthalmic Outpatient Department on 01423 542217.

If it is out of hours please telephone the Harrogate Hospital switchboard on 01423 885959 and ask to speak to the Ophthalmology on-call doctor.

### Further Information

Other sources of useful information can be found at:

NHS [www.nhs.co.uk](http://www.nhs.co.uk)

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust website [www.hdft.nhs.uk](http://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](mailto:hdft.patientexperience@nhs.net)

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