



Blepharitis

What is blepharitis?

Blepharitis is a common condition that causes inflammation (irritation) of the eyelids. It is common in children and for most people it is not harmful. Symptoms include red and sore eyelids, tiny flakes like dandruff at the bottom of the eyelashes, the feeling that there is something in the eye, dry or burning eyes and sometimes blurring of the vision.

What causes blepharitis?

The eyelids contain tiny glands which make an oil, keeping the eyes moist. In blepharitis, these glands become blocked, causing irritated eyelids and dry sore eyes. It is thought that, in some people, blepharitis is partly caused by sensitivity to the bacteria (staphylococcus) which normally live on the skin. Blepharitis is more common if your child has other skin conditions such as eczema.

Treatment

The doctor may prescribe antibiotic drops or ointment, artificial tear drops and occasionally, antibiotics by mouth or steroid eye drops. The most important treatment is good eye care, known as 'lid hygiene'. This should be done twice daily, even when

the symptoms are not there, to prevent the condition causing further problems.

- Warm compress: Boil some water and let it cool a little or use water from the hot tap. Water should be hot but not hot enough to burn. Soak cotton wool or a clean flannel in the water and gently press onto your child's closed eyelids for two to three minutes at a time.
- Massage your child's eyelids by gently rolling your first finger over them in a circular motion or running the length of your finger up and down the eyelids towards the eyelashes. This helps to push out the oil from the tiny eyelid glands.
- Use a moistened cotton bud to gently clean the inside edge of the eyelids and any flakes on the lashes. If your child is too young to do that, a moistened face cloth held firmly across your index finger can be used.

Complications

Blockage of the glands can lead to a chalazion or meibomian gland cyst, leaving a round, painless swelling sometimes with discolouration underneath the eyelid. Most disappear

