



*Ophthalmology • Refractive Surgery*  
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# Blepharitis

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Blepharitis is a common and chronic inflammation of the eyelids that causes redness, itching, and a potential secondary eye infection. It is more commonly seen in people who have oily skin, dandruff, or dry eyes. It can be seen in both young children and adults.

Everyone has bacteria on the surface of the skin, but some people are more sensitive to it. As the bacteria replicates, it causes burning, itching, and flaking along the lashes and eyelid margins. More often the irritations are minor, however, some individuals can develop an allergic response to the bacteria leading to inflammation of the cornea.

### Symptoms

The swelling and inflammation around and at the edges of the eyelids can cause one or more of the following symptoms in and around the eyes:

- Dandruff-like flaking
- Crusty layer of dried discharge
- Swelling and puffiness
- Redness (bloodshot eyes and eyelids)
- Irritation (discomfort)
- Burning
- Grainy/coarse sensation under the eyelid (foreign body sensation)

**Alexandria**  
703-931-9100

**Fairfax**  
703-573-8080

**Sterling**  
703-430-4400

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703-858-3170



## **Treatment**

Blepharitis can generally be diagnosed by a slit lamp (microscope) exam in your eye doctor's office.

Treatment of blepharitis begins with a warm washcloth held against the closed eyelids for a few minutes a day. Not only does this loosen and clear away the flakes and debris, but it also softens the oily secretions of the eyelid glands ultimately preventing a stye from developing.

Using a nonirritating topical antibiotic and/or a reduced-strength corticosteroid are effective treatments for most cases.

Good hygiene practices such as frequent cleansing of the eyelids with a clean washcloth, warm water; and, in some cases, mild soap (baby no tears formula) can prevent the build up of bacteria and remove the crusty discharge.

Hypoallergenic sterile lid cleansers can be purchased in the eye care section of your pharmacy or drug store. Your doctor may prescribe a more powerful lid scrub if simple cleansing does not help.

Ineffective treatment or lack of treatment for blepharitis may lead to the development of an abscess within the eye called a stye, or a firm nodule called a chalazion. Both can be uncomfortable and hard to treat.

Sometimes antibiotics and/or steroid eye drops are used if the cornea has become involved. Although medications work fast and effectively, long-term control of this chronic condition is best handled with consistent eyelid hygiene.