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# Blepharospasm (Eye Twitching)

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## Definition

Almost everyone at some time in his or her life has experienced a frequent and annoying muscle twitch of the eyelid. It may have followed a late night of studying or hours of driving, stress or drinking caffeinated beverages. Usually, this annoyance disappears after a period of rest and relaxation.

Occasionally, the spasms are caused by an actual change in the eye's physical makeup and the spasms do not go away, but rather become a constant annoyance.

## Symptoms

Due to a nervous system disorder, such as Tourette's syndrome, or an irritation on the surface of the cornea or the conjunctiva (the outermost lining of the eye under the eyelid), the eye will frequently or continuously twitch (spasm).

Vision is generally not affected except in the most severe cases where the eyelid(s) remain shut. Frequently, dry-eye syndrome is experienced along with blepharospasm. Occasionally, blepharospasm is drug-induced and will be resolved when the dosage is reduced.

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## **Treatment**

The most common forms of blepharospasm will resolve after a period of rest. Usually, no treatment is necessary. Stress and anxiety can play a large roll in chronic eye twitching. Therefore, stress management skills may be one of the first treatments prescribed.

The more chronic forms of blepharospasm can be treated in one or more of the following ways:

- Drug therapy - this often requires the use of more than one prescription and a well thought out dosing schedule.
- Botox injections - the botulinum toxin injected directly into the eyelid actually blocks the nerve impulses to the eyelid to stop the twitching. The treatment has to be repeated every three to four months. Risks include overdosing that will cause the eyelid to droop, blurred vision and double vision.
- Surgery - used as a last effort to relieve blepharospasms, certain muscles to the eyelids that are responsible for its closing are removed.