BLEPHARITIS

Blepharitis is a common, chronic problem of the eyelid margin which causes irritation, redness and crusting of the eyelids. The cause is inflammation of the oil glands of the eyelid which settles down with treatment but can flare up from time to time. It is more common in people who have eczema or rosacea. The aim of treatment is to improve the function of the eyelid glands

Hot compress

Dip a face cloth in warm tap water (make sure the water is not hot enough to burn you). Hold it over both closed eyelids for 2 minutes. It is often easier to do this while bathing or showering.

Clean the eyelid margins

Use a pinch of Sodium Bicarbonate in a glass of warm water or a commercial product such as 'Lid Care' or 'SteriLid'. If using sodium bicarbonate, dip a cotton bud into the solution and rub along the eye lashes to clean away the crusting and discharge. Clean both upper and lower eyelids. Be careful not to scratch your eye in the process. You can also use a clean finger to scrub your eye lashes instead of using a cotton bud.

Apply ointments and drops

After cleaning the eyelids, rub the prescribed ointment (or ointments) into the eyelid margins with a cotton bud or clean finger. This will reduce any inflammation and treat any infection. Lubricating artificial tear drops are used during the day to relieve the irritation and dry eyes that blepharitis causes.

Warm compresses and eyelid margin scrubs should be done twice a day for the first month and reduced thereafter. Ointments are usually only required for the first month. The initial treatment may stir up the inflammation in the first week before the eyes feel better.

Remember that blepharitis is a recurrent condition which needs ongoing care. It may flare up at times requiring ointment and intensive eyelid hygiene. If your eye does not respond to treatment, contact your eye specialist.

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