

Information for Patients

Chalazion

What is a Chalazion?

A Chalazion, also known as a meibomian cyst, is a common condition affecting your eyelid. It is caused by a blockage of a gland in your eyelid. The cyst (fluid-filled swelling) is usually felt as a small lump on the upper or lower eyelid.

Why does this occur?

There are tiny glands just under the inner surface of your eyelid. These make an oily fluid to help lubricate your eye. If a gland gets blocked then the fluid cannot escape and it can cause swelling of the gland and develop into a cyst. In a small proportion the inflammation causes a nodule (or granuloma) to form. This is a firm, more solid lump that can take time to resolve. Chalazions are more common in people who have an eye condition called blepharitis, or inflamed skin conditions such as rosacea and eczema.

What are the symptoms of a chalazion?

- A small lump which develops on your eyelid. It might look unsightly.
- Sometimes it causes mild pain, tenderness or irritation, particularly if it has just started - this usually settles.
- Very occasionally, it gets infected; it then becomes more swollen and painful.
- Your sight is not usually affected, but rarely the lump presses on the eyeball and distorts vision.

What is the treatment for a Chalazion?

- Most people get better without any treatment.
- Hot compresses help to ease discomfort and soften/drain the cyst. Hold a clean flannel or cotton wool ball that has been in hot tap water, gently

- but firmly against your closed eye. Do this for 5 -10 minutes, 3 - 4 times a day. (The water should be hot, but comfortable and not scalding.)
- Massage of the cyst after using a hot compress can encourage the cyst to drain. Do this gently, with a clean finger or cotton bud, in the direction of the eyelashes.
 - Cleaning your eyelid twice per day removes grease and grime that might contribute to cysts forming.

It could take from a couple of weeks to a few months, to resolve completely. However, if it is not causing you any problems, it is probably best just to watch and wait. If it is persistent and troublesome please ask your GP to review you.

A small operation is an option if the lump does not disappear, or if it causes persistent troublesome symptoms. Your GP can refer you to an eye surgeon (ophthalmologist) for this. The operation is done under local anaesthetic and your eye and eyelid are numbed. A small cut is then made on the inside of your eyelid to release the contents of the cyst. It is a minor procedure.

Are there any complications?

Most Chalazions settle without any problems and antibiotic ointments, drops and tablets are not routinely required. Rarely a cyst can become infected, and this infection can spread to involve the whole eyelid and tissues surrounding the eye. If you develop this type of complication, called cellulitis, you need to see a medical professional on the same day.

Will it happen again?

For most people a Chalazion occurs just once. However, some people are prone to developing them and it could recur. You might be able to reduce recurrence by using a hot compress on your eyelids, and bathing your eyelids each day (described above). If it recurs please ask your GP to refer you back to your local eye department with a request for surgery.

Because each patient is different the information contained in this leaflet is a general guide only. If you require any further information or wish to discuss anything outlined in this leaflet, please speak to a member of the nursing or medical staff treating you, or contact your GP.