

Information for Patients

Removal of a Meibomian Cyst (Chalazion)

The doctor or nurse practitioner has diagnosed that you have a meibomian cyst, commonly called a chalazion, which might be on the upper or lower part of your eyelid.

What is a chalazion?

A chalazion (or meibomian cyst) is a lump in the eyelid that forms because the duct of an oily gland in the eyelid becomes blocked. This could appear as a lump on the inside or outside of the eyelid and often occurs with blepharitis (inflammation of the eyelid edges). The lump might gradually increase in size and become red and painful if it is infected.

How can I prevent a chalazion?

It is important to clean your eyelids thoroughly to stop these lumps forming (please refer to the blepharitis leaflet for lid cleaning instructions).

What is the treatment?

The lump should shrink gradually but could take several months to disappear completely. If it becomes infected you will require antibiotic ointment, tablets or both. Your GP or the nurse practitioner can prescribe these. If the lump is large or does not appear to be shrinking you will need a minor operation called an incision and curettage.

Surgical removal of chalazion

If you have been advised that your cyst requires removal you will receive an appointment to attend as a day patient. You should eat and drink and take all medication as normal on this day. If you normally wear make-up, please ensure this is removed before your attendance. You are advised not to drive yourself to the hospital, as you will have an eye pad on when leaving and will not be able to drive home.

You will have your vision checked and be examined by the doctor/nurse practitioner on the slit lamp microscope. Following an explanation of the treatment you will be asked to sign a consent form if you have not already done so. Anaesthetic drops are put in your eye and a local anaesthetic is injected into your eyelid over the area of the cyst. This will sting a little.

A metal lid clamp will be placed on your eyelid, (you might feel some pressure as the lid clamp is positioned) and the eyelid is flipped over and a small cut is made on the inside of the eyelid, so there is no visible scar on the outside of the eyelid.

The contents of the cyst are removed with a fine scraper, and the clamp is removed. Antibiotic ointment will be put into your eye and an eye pad applied. This will need to stay in place for approximately four hours. You may wish to bathe your eye following removal of the eye pad. You should use cooled boiled water and a cotton wool pad, wiping gently from the inside to the outside of your eyelid.

Potential Complications

Following the procedure, there might be slight bruising of the eyelid, and the lump could still appear to be on the eyelid. This is due to local inflammation and will normally settle within a week to ten days although this can sometimes take longer.

There is a risk of infection following any surgical procedure. In order to prevent this, you will be given antibiotic ointment to apply 3-4 times a day for approximately one week. It is important that you use the ointment as prescribed.

There is a risk of bleeding following any surgical procedure. In the unlikely event that your eyelid bleeds following the operation, place the heel of your hand over the closed eye and apply firm pressure for ten minutes. If the bleeding does not stop please contact the hospital on the numbers below.

On rare occasions, the chalazion might reappear if excision is incomplete.

You could get further cysts if other glands in the eyelid become blocked. If you have been given lid hygiene instructions, it is important that these are followed.

Should you have any concerns following your minor surgery please contact the nurse practitioners in the Emergency Eye Department on (0161) 701 0249 8.00am - 8.00pm Monday - Friday. If you are unable to contact staff on this number, please phone Ward 55 on (0161) 276 5512 available 24 hours every day.

