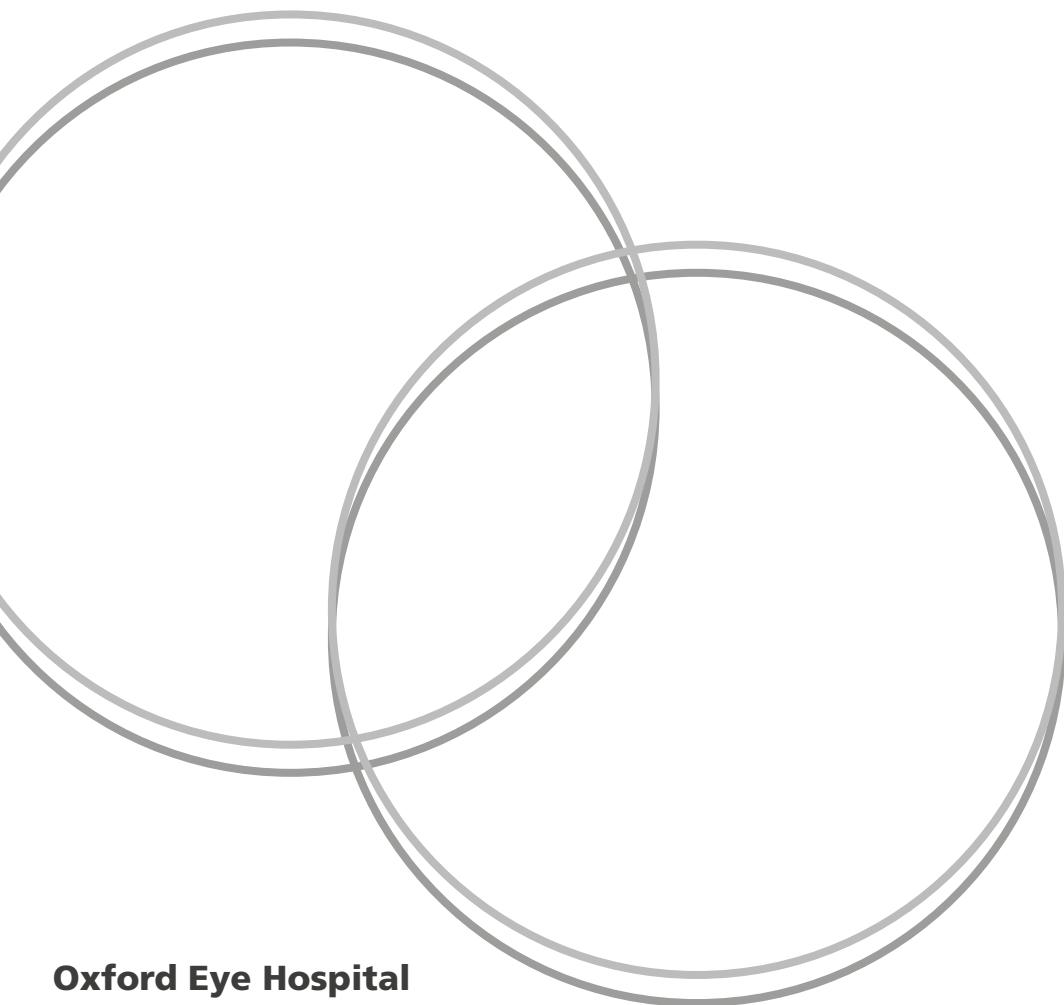


# Treatment for a chalazion/meibomian cyst

Information for patients



# What is a chalazion?

A chalazion (or meibomian cyst) is a small lump or swelling in the eyelid, containing fluid or semi-solid material. It is a fairly common condition and is caused by a blockage in one of the small glands in the eyelid, called the meibomian gland.

Often, the blocked gland becomes inflamed or infected. This then leads to swelling of the meibomian gland, called a chalazion or meibomian cyst. Sometimes, the cyst (if left alone) can discharge or burst spontaneously through the skin of the eyelid, or through the inner lining of the eyelid. However, this is rare.

Although it is unsightly, it is easy to treat and should not cause you any major problems with your vision.

# What are the signs and symptoms?

You may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- a small, inflamed lump which may look unpleasant
- mild pain or irritation
- swelling, redness and pain, which can be caused by an infected chalazion
- rarely, the chalazion becoming big enough to block a small part of your field of vision
- the chalazion pressing on the eyeball and causing blurred vision.

# What is the treatment?

As a first step in treatment, you will be prescribed antibiotics to reduce the inflammation in the eyelid.

A chalazion will very often get better without any further treatment after several months. However, heat treatment with hot compresses (a cotton wool pad that has been soaked in hot water and applied to the closed eyelid) can also help. It may actually release the contents of the cyst, which would mean that no further intervention is needed. Please take care when using the hot compress, to make sure that the hot water does not scald your eyelid.

If the above treatments do not work, a chalazion can be removed with a small operation called 'Incision and Curettage' (I&C). This involves making a small cut to the cyst and then cleaning out the contents. This is carried out under local anaesthetic, when your skin and the surrounding area is made numb.

It is a relatively quick procedure (about 20 minutes) and you should be able to go home on the same day. Your GP can refer you for this or, if you have come to the Emergency Department, the nurse treating you will be able to arrange an appointment. This will be sent to you in the post.

# What does the operation involve?

You will be asked to come to the Eye Minor Procedures clinic in Outpatients at the Oxford Eye Hospital in the West Wing of the John Radcliffe Hospital. You will then be called by a member of the team into the minor procedures room. You will be offered a seat and your nurse practitioner or doctor will confirm your details, as well as the eye which is having the procedure.

You will be asked to sign a consent form, to confirm you are happy with the procedure going ahead. If you have any concerns or worries it is important to discuss them with the nurse practitioner or doctor before you sign the consent form.

After you have signed the consent form, you will be asked to lie on a couch. You can remain in your clothes.

A sterile sheet, called a drape, will be used to cover the front and upper part of your clothes and your face. Your affected eye will be left exposed and we will make room for you to breathe comfortably. The drape helps protect your clothes from being soiled, as well as providing a sterile working area for the nurse practitioner or doctor to carry out the procedure.

The nurse practitioner or doctor will put a numbing drop into your affected eye. They will then also inject local anaesthetic around your eyelid. The drops and the injection will sting for about 10-20 seconds, but will soon make the area numb.

The nurse practitioner or doctor will then remove the cyst from the inside of your eyelid, through a small incision or cut (approximately 3mm).

The content of the cyst is usually disposed of, but occasionally it will be sent to the laboratory to be looked at under a microscope (a biopsy sample) to make sure it is harmless.

You will not need stitches and no scar will be visible. The nurse or surgeon will then apply some antibiotic ointment to your eye and will cover it with two eye pads.

## **What happens afterwards?**

You can remove the pads after 2-3 hours, or you may want to leave them on overnight for comfort. Leaving the pads on overnight can also help to reduce swelling and bruising of the eyelid.

Your eyelid is likely to be bruised after the procedure – do not worry, this is normal and will get better within 2 weeks.

You will be given some antibiotic ointment to use 3-4 times a day for 5 days. We will also give you a discharge information leaflet to go home with. You are not likely to need a follow-up appointment.

## **What are the risks?**

This is a simple and safe procedure. Potential risks include bleeding, bruising of the eyelid and the cyst returning.

You can help prevent this from happening by regularly cleaning your eyelids and using hot compresses, even when you do not have symptoms of chalazion, as well as gently massaging your eyelids.

If you do develop another chalazion, there is no need to go to the Eye Emergency department. If, after few weeks, it is still bothering you, you can ask your GP to refer you back to the Eye Minor Procedures clinic.

You may have an allergic reaction to the antibiotic ointment. If this happens, you can see your GP, who will change you to a different antibiotic ointment.

## **Additional information**

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment, please speak to your GP or your eye doctor at the Oxford Eye Hospital.

# How to contact us

**If you have an eye emergency, please do not come to the Eye Hospital straight away**

Call our specialist telephone triage number

Tel: **01865 234 567**

**Option 1** followed by **option 1**

Monday to Friday 08:30 to 4:30pm

Saturday and Sunday 08:30 to 3:30pm (including Bank Holidays)

You will be able to talk to a ophthalmic professional who will advise you

If you need advise out of hours please phone **NHS 111** or your **out of hours GP practice**

## Further information

[www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23069132/](http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23069132/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/eyelid-problems/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/eyelid-problems/)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Reviewed by: Dolores Cruz , Oculo-Plastics Nurse Practitioner and  
Anthony Afanu, Practice Development Nurse.

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