

Chalazion – a lump on the eyelid

This information has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about a chalazion. If you do have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctor or nurse caring for you or contact the nurse practitioner – details are at the end of this leaflet.

What is a chalazion?

A chalazion is a lump on the eyelid that is caused by inflammation of a tiny gland within the skin. This gland produces oil. When this gland becomes blocked, it can rupture and the inflammation process begins. A chalazion is not a sty, which is an infection in the eyelash hair follicle root on the surface of the skin.

What are the signs and symptoms?

A hard, localised swelling appears on the upper or lower eyelid, occurring over a few weeks. It may be tender and the eyelid may appear red, if it is infected

How is it diagnosed?

The ophthalmologist (eye doctor) will examine the back of the eyelid and the eye itself.

What treatments are available?

Applying moist heat to the eyelids can help – this is called 'hot spoon bathing'. The heat helps to relieve pain and encourages the lump to discharge.

Instructions for hot spoon bathing:

We recommend that you have someone at home help you with this. The heat helps to relieve pain and encourages the lump to discharge.

1. Pad the end of a wooden kitchen spoon with an absorbent material such as gauze or a flannel.
2. Dip the spoon into a bowl of steaming water.
3. Keeping the eye closed, raise the padded end to the affected eye, keeping it about an inch away from the eyelid.
4. As the spoon cools, re-dip it into the steaming water and repeat step 3.
5. Repeat for 10 to 15 minutes and do this two to three times daily.

Alternatively wring out a face towel with warm, boiled water and gently place it over the closed lid for 5 to 10 minutes. Make sure the water is not too hot. Gently massage the area with your finger tips for two minutes, every morning and night for two weeks. This is particularly suitable for children.

What if hot spoon bathing does not work?

If the lump grows and does not respond to hot spoon bathing or applying a warm face towel, you may need antibiotic drops or an ointment.

If the antibiotics don't work you may need a small surgical procedure called 'incision and curettage'. Your doctor will explain this procedure if you need to have it. Please tell your doctor if you have any questions.

What happens if I do not get treatment?

Sometimes the lump disappears or shrinks by itself without treatment being needed.

However, without treatment the lump may enlarge and the affected lid could swell – this could lead to more discomfort.

What should I do if the symptoms get worse?

Chalazion is not a dangerous condition and will not affect your sight unless your eyeball becomes red.

If your symptoms get worse or do not go away with treatment after two weeks, please call the nurse practitioner in eye casualty (contact details in the box below).

If you are worried about your symptoms outside of these hours, contact your GP or NHS Direct (contact details at the bottom of this page).

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nurse practitioner in eye casualty on 020 7188 0077 between 8.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Outside these hours you can go to the main accident and emergency department at St Thomas' hospital.

Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Direct

Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 0845 4647 **w:** www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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