

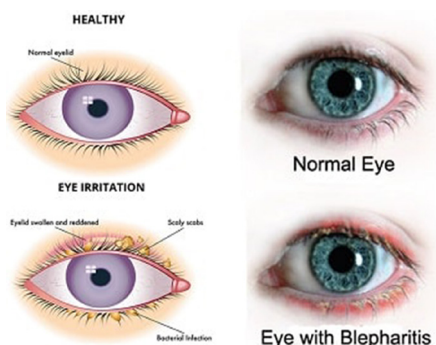
Your eyesight is precious. Let us help you to look after it.

Blepharitis

Blepharitis is an inflammatory condition of the eyelids. It can cause discomfort but rarely causes serious damage to your eyes. It can cause irritation, burning, stinging and redness of the eyes, crusting around the eyelashes and also lead to dry eye which can be very uncomfortable.

There are two types of blepharitis, one affects the outside edges of your eyelids and eyelashes and is a similar condition to dandruff. You may have noticed tiny scales on your eyelashes; these are similar to the flakes found in your hair in dandruff and are caused by a type of dermatitis or skin inflammation which affects the scalp, eyelashes, ears and eyebrows.

The second type affects the oil producing glands within your eyelids, often blocking these glands and preventing the oil being mixed with your tears. The purpose of this oil is to evenly spread the tears across your eye and prevent evaporation of the tears. If this oil is not secreted properly then the tears will evaporate too quickly and cause **dry eye** symptoms. Bacteria on our skin can also cause both types of blepharitis. These conditions can easily be detected as part of a thorough eye examination when your optometrist looks closely at the front of your eyes. Depending on the severity of the condition, there are different ways to treat it.



Signs & Symptoms

- Red, inflamed eyelids
- Itching, irritation & discomfort
- Crusting around the eye lashes
- Tiny flakes or scales on the eyelids resembling fine dandruff.

The symptoms can be relieved by a combination of some of the following:

Medicated cleansers are available from your optician which can be used to gently clean the eyelids. These are available as lid wipes, lotions, gels or foams. Once the eyelids have been cleaned, a gentle massage also helps to express the oils properly.

A **Hot Compress** can be done with a clean face cloth soaked in hot water or better still, an Eyebag which can be heated up in the microwave. They should be held against your closed eyelids for 5 minutes, being careful that the temperature is not so hot that it burns the skin. Repeat this procedure twice a day. This treatment aims to help melt the crusts and unblock the glands, allowing the oils to flow more freely.

Lid Massage Firmly stroke the skin of the eyelids towards the base of the lashes. Continue to do this to the whole width of the eyelid top and bottom. You can massage the lids using either a clean cotton bud (separate one for each eye) or the tip of your finger (wash your hands prior to massage). This will help unblock the oil glands and express the oils.

If the blepharitis is caused by a serious bacterial infection then a course of antibiotics is sometimes required from your GP.

Blepharitis is a long term condition which means that once you have treated it, the inflammation may still come back if you stop the cleaning regime completely. Your optometrist will be able to advise you on the best course of treatment for your condition.