

Patient information: accident and emergency service

Stye

What is a stye?

A stye is a common bacterial infection of an eyelash follicle in the eyelid. The condition is more common in children and is sometimes associated with a condition called blepharitis, in which inflammation (irritation) and dandruff-like flakes develop around the roots of the eyelashes (see [blepharitis leaflet](#)).

The stye appears as a small, red and tender spot, with a yellow centre, at the bottom of an eyelash and can vary in size over time.

What is the treatment?

Many styes will recover with time and this can be helped by using warm compresses and cleaning the base of the eyelashes with a moistened cotton bud twice daily.

If possible, the doctor or nurse in A&E will use tweezers to gently remove the lash which will often encourage the stye to discharge. Antibiotic ointment to rub into the base of the lashes may sometimes be helpful.

Less commonly, a stye may cause a spreading infection along the surface of the lid which may need a course of antibiotics by mouth.

Prevention

To prevent styes from recurring, it may help to treat any underlying blepharitis by cleaning your eyelids on a daily basis (lid hygiene). See our blepharitis leaflet for details.

When to seek advice

If the eye becomes increasingly red or painful or your sight becomes more blurred, you should telephone Moorfields Eye Hospital Direct for advice on 020 7566 2345 or attend your local A&E department or the Moorfields 24/7 A&E department which is open for emergency eye problems only for a further examination.

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