Treatment of meibomian cysts

(cysts affecting the eye lids)
This leaflet explains about the problem you have, and the different methods that can be used to treat it.

Some of these involve self-treatment at home. Some require a minor procedure by a nurse or doctor within the eye clinic. You may need a combination of both.

If you are attending the eye clinic to have your cyst treated (by surgery or injection) you will have been given a separate booklet about this appointment. Please refer to it for information about:

- Your anaesthetic
- How you need to prepare
- Where you need to go
- What happens after the procedure

Please read this booklet carefully before you come in. You may want to read it with a friend or relative.

What is a meibomian cyst?

It is a type of fluid filled cyst on the upper or lower eye lid.
What causes the cyst?

In the upper and lower eyelids there are lots of tiny oil glands. These help to keep the front surface of the eye lubricated. If these oil glands become blocked a build up of fluid will cause a cyst to form.

What are the symptoms?

The main things you may experience are:

- A lump developing in the eyelid - sometimes several cysts can occur at the same time
- Inflammation or irritation
- Occasional pain or tenderness
- Infection - the lump can become more swollen and painful, and can produce a sticky discharge

Sight is not affected. However if a cyst is very large and swollen it may slightly restrict your field of vision temporarily.

What are the treatment options?

Cysts can often disappear without any treatment. However, sometimes they may take a long time to go, or the symptoms may become problematic and bothersome.
Therefore, you may need one or more of the treatments outlined below. Some of these treatments can help to reduce the symptoms. Some of them remove the cyst. You may need to try more than one method; each cyst is different. Your doctor or nurse will advise you.

**Hot compress and lid hygiene**

This helps to ease irritation and swelling.

For the best effect repeat at least once a day, preferably twice. It would be advisable to treat both your eyes with this method. You will need to continue for several weeks or longer.

It may take some time before you notice a difference in your symptoms.

This method can also help reduce the chance of a cyst re-occurring in the future. Therefore you may wish to continue this daily after your cyst has gone.

**Hot compress**

This helps to thin the oil in the eyelid glands to reduce the blockage.

- Soak a flannel in hot (but **not** scalding) water
• Hold gently but firmly onto your closed eyelids until cool
• Repeat a couple of times
• Sometimes this warmth and slight pressure is enough to burst the cyst and release the contents

Lid hygiene
This cleans debris from the roots of your eye lashes and helps reduce any blockage

• Make a weak solution of mild baby shampoo (a few drops) and cooled boiled water
• Dip a cotton bud into this solution and clean gently but firmly along the root of the lashes
• Use a separate cotton bud for each lid (two buds per eye)

Antibiotics - eye ointment or tablets
These may be required if cysts become infected. These would be in the form of tablets. Remember to take the complete course as prescribed, or the infection is likely to return.
A small operation

If the cyst does not go, or if it causes troublesome symptoms, an operation can be done to remove it. This usually takes about 10-15 minutes. The wound does not require any stitches.

- The affected eye lid is turned up or down so the cyst can be accessed from underneath - this avoids scarring to your eye lid
- A small cut is then made into the cyst to drain the contents
- An antibiotic ointment is then applied
- The eye is then padded shut for several hours, possibly overnight
- Antibiotic ointment will be given to you to use for a few days after the operation
- Instructions on the care of your eye will also be given to you

All operations have some level of risk. The surgeon will discuss the potential risks with you when you sign the consent form before the operation. There are some common effects of the surgery, which normally settle gradually:

- Bleeding from the wound
  – this normally settles within a few hours
• Bruising and swelling of the eyelids
  – this normally settles within a few days
• Infection
  – we provide you with an antibiotic cream to help prevent this

Steroid injections

Sometimes the cyst can be too small to operate on. In this case a nurse or doctor may suggest a steroid injection into the area surrounding the cyst. This can help to reduce the lump.

This may take a few days or weeks for the full effect to be reached.

After treatment, will the cyst come back?

For most people a cyst occurs just once. However, some people are prone to developing further cysts and may require treatment or surgery again.

You can help to prevent further cysts forming by regularly using the hot compress and lid hygiene method (as described above). However, this is not a cure and you may find that these cysts still occasionally reappear. Hopefully this method can minimise their frequency.
If you have any further questions you can contact the oculoplastic team on:

0114 271 1727 (Monday to Wednesday)
0114 226 8964 or 271 2365 (Monday to Friday)

Alternative formats can be available on request. Please email: sth.alternativeformats@nhs.net

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