

Patient information factsheet

Chalazion (meibomian cyst)

We have written this factsheet to explain what a chalazion is and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a chalazion?

A chalazion (or meibomian cyst) is a small lump filled with oil that forms in the eyelid. More than one chalazion is called 'chalazia'.

What causes a chalazion?

A chalazion develops when a meibomian gland becomes blocked or inflamed. Meibomian glands are tiny glands in your upper and lower eyelids that produce an oil to help keep your eyes moist and prevent your tears from evaporating too quickly. If one of your meibomian glands become blocked or inflamed, the oil cannot escape and builds up, creating a chalazion.

What are the symptoms of a chalazion?

Symptoms of a chalazion can include:

- a lump on your eyelid that you can see or feel
- mild eye pain or irritation
- watery eyes
- mild eye discharge
- occasional blurred vision

If the chalazion becomes infected, your eyelid may become red, swollen and tender.

How is a chalazion treated?

Most chalazia are painless and can usually be treated at home with the use of warm compresses and eyelid massages. Chalazia can take some time to improve, usually ranging from a few weeks to a few months.

How to perform a warm compress

- Soak a flannel in a clean bowl of boiled water and leave it to cool to bath temperature (hot but not scalding).
- Squeeze out the water from the flannel, fold it and place it over your closed eyes for 10 to 15 minutes.
- If the flannel becomes cold, repeat the steps above.
- Do this several times a day to help open the blocked oil gland.

How to perform an eyelid massage

Immediately after a warm compress, gently massage the chalazion with clean fingers in the direction of your eye lashes to help it drain away.

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These treatments are most effective when started as soon as a chalazion appears.

If a chalazion becomes infected, your doctor may prescribe you a short course of antibiotics (in the form of ointments, drops or tablets) to treat the infection.

If a chalazion causes any complications or does not improve after you have performed regular treatment for several months, your doctor may refer you to the eyelid clinic for further assessment.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact your general practitioner (GP) or local opticians for advice if the chalazion:

- becomes more noticeable or your eyelid becomes redder and/or more swollen
- is painful
- affects your vision
- doesn't disappear after six months

Can a chalazion come back?

A chalazion can occur just once. However, it is very common for a chalazion to return or to have more than one chalazion at a time. Some people are more prone to getting them. To help prevent chalazia developing in the future, we recommend performing regular warm compresses and eyelid massages (even when you don't have a chalazion).

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Non-urgent queries

Eye unit

Telephone: **023 8120 5073** or **023 8120 1429** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5.30pm)

Email: nonurgenteyeunit@uhs.nhs.uk

Urgent queries

Eye emergency department triage line

Telephone: **023 8120 6592** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 7.30pm and weekends and bank holidays, 8am to 6pm)

If you have any concerns outside of these hours, go to your nearest emergency department.

Useful links

www.patient.info/eye-care/swollen-eyelid/chalazion

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**