

Meibomitis

Meibomitis is a common condition that can cause inflammation of the eyelid margins. Meibomian glands are present in the eyelids and are responsible for producing the oily component of a person's tears. Dysfunction of the meibomian glands leads to an unstable tear film, which can cause fluctuating vision, burning, and stinging especially on waking and in the evening. If the openings along the eyelid margin become blocked then fatty material "backs up" within the gland. The result can be sore, red, and swollen eyelids. This can progress to infection, hordeolum (stye) at the eyelid margin, or chalazion (a lump formed deep inside the eyelid from buildup within the gland).

Some people can have a tendency toward this condition. This includes patients that have either dry or oily skin, or skin conditions like rosacea, psoriasis, and eczema. Frequent exposure to dirty, dusty environments also contributes to gland blockages.

Meibomitis is treated by warm moist compresses held to the affected eye(s) four times daily. **Bruder®** or **Thera Pearl®** masks are available commercially; a microwaved potato wrapped in a clean washcloth can also be utilized. It is important to be diligent with performing warm compresses. While holding the heat source against the closed eye, massage the eyelids for about 5 minutes. Do this four times daily or more, then gradually taper as condition improves. Chronic meibomitis patients will benefit from continued warm compress therapy.

Scrubbing the eyelid margins with products like **Sterilid®** and **Ocusoft®** foam can be beneficial. For patients with sensitivity to lid cleansing foams, eyelid sprays such as **Hypochlor®** or **Avenova®** are available over the counter. Lipid based artificial tears, such as **Systane Complete®**, **Refresh Optive Advanced®**, or **Soothe XP®** can also help reduce symptoms caused by meibomitis.

A daily supplement of high-quality omega-3 fatty acids can also help improve meibomitis and dry eye. Nordic Naturals **Pro Omega 2000®**, available for purchase at the Family Eye Care Center and Optical Gallery, is a high potency fish oil capsule guaranteed for purity, freshness and quality. A dosage of **2000 mg daily** is advised. A vegan version (Nordic Naturals **Algae Omega®**) is also available. Omega-3 supplements are best taken with food. People on certain blood thinners should not take these supplements. Check with your primary care physician before starting any new supplement.

More advanced cases of inflammation or infection may require use of an oral antibiotic or medicated ointment. Some of the oily blockage may be expressed at a slit lamp in the exam room but for severe or chronic cases, **LipiFlow®** may be beneficial. In this FDA approved but out-of-pocket treatment, the doctor applies heat and pressure to the eyelids to allow oil from the blocked glands to flow into the tear film. Please ask your doctor if you'd like more information about LipiFlow®