## Ophthalmology Department

# Inflammation of the Eyelids
## (also called blepharitis or meibomitis)

Along the edge of the eyelids are a row of little glands that make grease which helps prevent the tears from evaporating too quickly. These glands are similar to the grease glands in the skin and the face. In some people, these glands either make too much grease or the grease is of an abnormal quality. The grease can also be altered by the bacteria that live in the skin. In any of these situations, the grease stops working properly and a long-term irritation of the eyes can develop.

Often the eyelid margin becomes reddened and some sticky matter tends to collect in the inner corner of the eyes overnight. The eyes may feel gritty, dry or sore, particularly in smoky atmosphere, bright sunlight and when tired. The abnormal grease stops the tears from wetting the eyes as effectively as they could which can then lead to drying of the surface of the eyes. In some people this may cause inadequate tear production.

This is a common problem but it is unusual for it to cause long term damage to the sight. Unfortunately there is no way to permanently cure this problem hence the aim of treatment is to make the eyes as comfortable as possible. The disorder tends to wax and wane for many years, however it is usually possible to reduce the discomfort so that it does not interfere too much with daily activities.

### Heat treatment

Because this is a long-term problem, treatment has to be simple enough for people to use regularly. One of the most effective ways to reduce the irritation and redness of the eyelids is to try to prevent the build-up of grease along the eyelid margin.

The best method is to try and melt the grease and clean along the lids to remove it. This can be done using a hot flannel bathing for about 10mins or a wheat bag (such as Eyebag) heated in a microwave (following the instruction manual).
We recommend that this is done twice a day at least for the first month and then daily thereafter.

Immediately after warming the eyelids, massage the closed eyelids to express oil from the meibomian glands. Gently but firmly sweep your clean finger over the skin at the edge of the closed eyelid from the nose outwards. Warm water should be used to rinse the eyes after massage.

## Artificial eye drops

Some people with eyelid inflammation do not make enough tears to keep the surface of the eye comfortably moist. If necessary, your specialist may give you an artificial tear drops to use in addition to the heat treatment.

## Oral antibiotics

A few people are so uncomfortable with this condition, or have other eye problems which can be made worse by the eyelid inflammation. It may therefore be necessary to prescribe a course of oral antibiotics to try to modify the type of grease produced by the eyelids. Initial treatment may last for 3 to 6 months.

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Ophthalmology Department

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