

# Stye

## What is a stye?

A stye is a very common infection of a gland at the edge of the eyelid. It is a nuisance and can be painful, but it is rarely a serious problem.

## How does it occur?

A stye occurs when bacteria infect one of the tiny glands at the base of the eyelid hairs. The gland then becomes inflamed.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are swelling and redness in the area of the stye. Often a tiny pimple is present. The infection usually is painful only if it is touched. Sometimes the infection drains and the eyelid returns to normal without treatment.

Styes do not affect vision unless the swelling blocks vision.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine your eyelid.

## How is it treated?

Put hot compresses on your eyes 3 to 4 times a day for several days. The compresses help your body fight the infection and may speed up drainage of the stye. The cloths you use for warm compresses should not be handled by others and you should wash them separately to prevent infecting others. Your healthcare provider may also prescribe antibiotic drops.

Sometimes a stye needs to be opened and drained by your healthcare provider for quick healing. Never attempt to open the stye yourself. Serious infection could spread into areas behind and around your eye.

If you have several styes, or if your styes recur, your doctor may want you to clean your eyelids regularly, following these steps:

- Moisten a washcloth with warm water and hold it over both eyes for several minutes. This helps to soften any deposits on the eyelids.
- Add a few drops of baby shampoo to a cup of water. Moisten a cotton swab with this mixture. Using the swab, clean all the deposits from the edges of your eyelids and eyelashes. Use a new swab for each eye.

## How long will the symptoms last?

Usually a stye clears up within a week. If you have a stye that lasts longer than this, see your healthcare provider.

## What can I do to help prevent styes?

Avoid getting bacteria on the eyelid. This can happen when you touch your eyelid or when you use makeup. It can also happen during insertion and removal of contact lenses. You can remove bacteria and debris from your eyelid by gently scrubbing the eyelash area with a washcloth and warm water.

*Reviewed and approved by the Wilmer Eye Institute of The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, MD. Web site: <http://www.wilmer.jhu.edu> ►►*

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