

Chalazion

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When the opening of the meibomian glands (the small oil glands near your eyelashes) becomes blocked by inflammation, a small tender swelling occurs in the eyelid. This is a cyst in the eyelid known as a chalazion. A common condition, it often occurs due to inflammation around the opening of the oil glands at the base of the eyelashes – blepharitis – which is caused by sensitivity to common bacteria found on the skin.

Treatment

The first stage of treatment involves using a warm compress and massaging your eyelid:

Warm compress: Boil some water and let it cool a little or use water from the hot tap. Soak cotton wool or a clean flannel in the warm (but not boiling) water, squeeze it out and gently press onto your closed eyelids for two to three minutes at a time.

Massage: Starting at the skin crease, gently massage the upper lid downwards to the lashes. The lower lid should be massaged upwards towards the lashes. This may release the contents of the cyst, which means further treatment will not be necessary.

Antibiotics may also be prescribed to reduce the inflammation, or if there is infection.

Surgery: If the chalazion does not respond to the first stage of the treatment, it can be drained.

Risks involved in chalazion surgery:

Your eyelid might be swollen and bruised for several days after your operation but this should settle after two weeks.

There is a risk of infection, but after the operation you will be given antibiotic ointment to apply, which should help prevent this.

With any eyelid surgery, there is a tiny risk of damage to the eye.

A chalazion can come back after being removed, or another one may appear on your eyelids. If this happens, use warm compresses and let Dr Adams know.

The procedure

Once you are lying comfortably, the skin around the chalazion will be injected with local anaesthetic. This will sting at first but the lid will soon become numb. Although you will still be able to feel pressure you should not feel any pain. Dr Adams will then make a small incision on the inner surface of your eyelid so that the contents of the cyst can be drained. A biopsy of the cyst may be taken.

Ointment will be applied and a pad placed over your eye. You will be able to go home on the same day.

Aftercare and advice

When the anaesthetic wears off, there may be some discomfort. Take mild pain relief e.g. paracetamol. Keep the pad over the eye for at least four hours to reduce swelling and bruising. When you remove the pad, you will find some blood or discharge around your eye. Clean the eyelid with cooled boiled water and use the maxidex and chlorsig drops 4 times a day and chlorsig ointment at night for 5 days. Most people can return to work the next day; if you need additional time off work let Dr Adams know so we can provide a medical certificate.

When to seek advice

If you experience visual loss, severe pain or bleeding that does not stop, contact Dr Adams at **Insight Eye Surgery** on **07 3154 1515** (Brisbane) or **07 5345 5011** (Noosa) or attend your local emergency department out of hours.