

## Eye Unit - Nurse-led Eyelid service

# Chalazion

### What is a Chalazion?

A Chalazion is a type of cyst that can occur in your eyelids. All along your eyelids, top and bottom, there are lots of little glands (meibomian glands) that produce an oily fluid, which becomes part of your tears. Sometimes the entrance to this gland blocks up and instead of the fluid coming out, it gets trapped and builds up to form a cyst (chalazion).

### What causes a Chalazion?

Sometimes there is no obvious reason for the cysts occurring but it is acknowledged that there is a much greater chance of developing a chalazion if you have another minor eyelid condition called Blepharitis. This is an inflammatory condition of the eyelids, which can easily be managed by learning to clean your eyelids in a specific way. If you are found to have blepharitis, you will be given exact details on the cleaning process.

### How are Chalazion treated?

The good news is that most patients with chalazion do not require any surgical treatment at all, as it will just go away if left alone or treated with warm compresses. The issue is how long it takes to go away. Some studies suggest that if left alone 30% of these cysts will be gone in three months and within a year up to 85 - 90% will also have settled. The ones that take longer than a year usually also settle but may take a number of years.

If you are not prepared to wait for the cyst to resolve then the other option is to have a small surgical procedure to release the trapped fluid.



### **What does surgery involve?**

You would come to the hospital and be seen as a day case. The operation is performed under a local anaesthetic, which means that you would be awake during the operation and an injection would be given to numb the eyelid. You need to know that the local anaesthetic works in a strange way. It numbs feelings of sharpness and pain, but because it doesn't numb feelings of pressure or stretching you may experience some feelings of discomfort during the procedure.

The operation is done by putting a small clamp around the cyst to hold it in place, and then the eyelid is turned outwards so that the underside of the eyelid can be seen. A small cut is then made on the inside of the eyelid and any trapped fluid is removed.

Following the operation the clamp is removed, antibiotic ointment is put in to the eye and an eye pad is put on. The eye pad remains in place for four hours and once it is removed the antibiotic ointment is then used three times a day for a week. You need to know that if you are wearing an eye pad you cannot drive a car as your insurance will not cover you.

It is also important that you realise that the operation is only aimed at releasing the trapped fluid and the surrounding area of the cyst will take a little while for it to resolve. Often the longer the cyst has been present the longer it will take to totally settle. A small lump may be present for anything up to two months.

### **Are there any risks/complications with surgery?**

All operations have risks attached to them, which will be discussed with you before surgery. The risks with Chalazion surgery are small but include:

- **Local anaesthetic** – It is important that you know what to expect when the local anaesthetic is first given. You will feel a sharp sensation usually followed by a stinging or burning feeling, which lasts about 5 seconds until the eyelid begins to go numb. It is very important that you keep your head still whilst the local anaesthetic injection is being given. If you were to dramatically move your head there is a chance that you could move the tip of the needle into other areas around your eye.
- **Reoccurrence** – The operation is relatively simple to perform and usually gives a good result. Unfortunately some people do experience

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a reoccurrence of the cyst. You can get reoccurrence in the same place on the eyelid or some people can just be more susceptible to this type of cyst and can get further cysts form on other areas of any of the eyelids.

- **Infection** – The eyelids usually heal very well and because the operation is performed on the underside of the eyelid the risk of infection is low. However it is routine to use antibiotic ointment for a week following surgery to reduce this risk further as the eyelid heals.
- **Bruising** – You need to be prepared that the eyelid will look worse immediately after surgery. It is normal to get some bruising and slight swelling but this should settle on its own in about a week.

### **Will I need to be seen again after surgery?**

Further appointments after surgery are not usually necessary. However if you are at all concerned about how your eyelid is healing you can contact the nurse that undertook your surgery and they will assess you again. If you are unable to contact the nurse for any reason there is an Eye Casualty at the hospital that you could contact for advice on 024 7696 6627

### **Are there any other treatments for Chalazion?**

Apart from allowing the cyst to settle on its own with time or having surgery the other alternative is to have the cyst injected with a steroid. The results of this are not totally clear and are not offered in the Nurse-led service. If this is something that you would like to consider please discuss it with the nurse who can refer you to see a Consultant.

### **If I leave the cyst alone is there anything else I should know?**

Sometimes the cysts can become infected. When they get infected the cyst may suddenly become bigger, red and angry looking and more tender to the touch. If this happens you need to get some antibiotic ointment or tablets from your doctor. The antibiotics will only get rid of the infection but not the cyst; time or surgery gets rid of the cyst.

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There is a very rare cancer that can occur in the glands in the eyelid. It is usually more common in older patients but if the cyst did not totally settle within a year or if it began to gradually grow or bleed it is important that you contact us for a further assessment. Visiting your own doctor first and asking him to refer you back to the service is the best way to do this.

For further information contact the Eyelid Specialist Nurse on **Tel: 024 7696 6533**

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