

CHALAZION

What is a Chalazion?

A chalazion appears as a lump in the upper or lower eyelid and is caused by an obstruction of an oil gland within the eyelid. It may increase in size over days to weeks and may become red, warm, or painful.

The gland that causes a chalazion is a modified oil gland lying within the eyelid. There are about 20 of these glands in each of the upper and lower lids. These glands, called Meibomian glands, secrete oil into the tears. The oil exits from each Meibomian gland through a small opening just behind the eyelashes of the upper and lower lids. A chalazion develops if the oil becomes too thick to flow. With nowhere to go, the oil builds up inside the gland. The gland ruptures. Oil is released into the tissue of the eyelid, inciting inflammation. A lump in the eyelid develops.

Although a **sty** also causes a lump in the eyelid, a chalazion is not a sty. A sty is an infection, and it does not involve an oil gland. A chalazion is not an infection. It results from inflammation. (Inflammation is characterized by swelling, redness, pain, and warmth, and has many causes.)

Chalazion Symptoms

- swelling of the upper or lower eyelid
- a hard lump in the upper or lower eyelid
- redness or pain in the upper or lower eyelid (A chalazion of the lower eyelid may be visible when you look inside the lid while looking in a mirror.)

Self-Care at Home

- Warm compresses may be helpful. Hold a warm, wet towel on the eyelid for five to 10 minutes, four times a day, to reduce swelling and promote drainage of the gland.
- Lightly massage the area several times a day.
- Do not "pop" or scratch the chalazion.

Often a chalazion goes away within a couple of weeks. If so, no long-term consequences occur. A chalazion is not contagious. If the chalazion lasts for weeks or comes back, your ophthalmologist should be consulted.

Medical Treatment

The treatment of a chalazion may include the following:

- Application of warm compresses for five to 10 minutes, four times a day, to reduce swelling and promote drainage of the gland.
- A prescription for antibiotic eyedrops or ointments if a bacterial infection is suspected to be present.
- Injection of a steroid (cortisone) in the area of the lump to eliminate the inflammation.

Sometimes a chalazion needs to be surgically removed.

If you have multiple chalazia, or recurrent chalazia, an abnormality in the oil glands is likely. This can be treated with long-term oral Doxycycline to alter the consistency of the oil produced by the glands. Using warm compresses and cleaning the eyelid margins can also decrease the chance of getting chalazia.

