



EYE APPEAL OPTOMETRY

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Chalazion

WHAT IS IT?

A *chalazion* is a cyst that forms within one of the glands in the eyelid. There are many different glands in the eyelid, but the most commonly ones affected are the meibomian glands. It becomes hard after other cells enter the gland and trap the lipids. Chalazia are caused by a number of different things, including chronic inflammation or infection of the eyelids or glands.

Although a bacterial agent may have caused the chalazion, most often it is sterile, meaning that there are no live bacteria inside the cyst. As such, antibiotic drops or ointments are not effective in treating the chalazion. However, they may be used to treat the underlying condition that caused the chalazion to develop.

Unlike hordeola, or styes, a chalazion is not painful. However, if the chalazion is very large, it can place excessive pressure on the eye, which may cause some discomfort. This may also cause blurred vision.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Lid Scrubs in the morning and before bedtime can remove the debris from the lids to prevent the reoccurrence of chalazia. Place a few drops of “no tears” baby shampoo on a warm wet washcloth. Rub the cloth together to make a lather. Close your eyes and clean your eyebrows, lids, and lashes. Keep your eyes closed and rinse with tap water. An alternative to this is using commercially available over the counter lid scrub solutions. You can either purchase OcuSoft Foam by OcuSoft or Sterilid Foam by Thera Tears.

Warm compresses with lid massage are always the first treatment for chalazia. Soak a washcloth with warm water, and apply it to the affected lid. Re-warm the wash cloth every minute or so. Hold the washcloth there for 5 to 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, gently massage the lid with your fingers, being careful not to press too hard on the eyelid. The heat increases blood flow to the area and the massage breaks up some of the hard material, so this may be the only treatment necessary.

Oral antibiotics are another form of treatment for chalazia. However, they are normally used to treat the underlying cause of the chalazia (like blepharitis, rosacea or meibomitis). There can potentially be side effects from using oral medications, so this is not a frequently used treatment method.

Steroid injections directly into the chalazion are another form of treatment. This is usually done only after many weeks of warm compresses are shown to be ineffective. On large chalazia, more than one injection may be necessary, and side effects from the steroid may also occur.

Surgical excision is where the chalazion is surgically cut out of the eyelid. This is done by first applying a small amount of anesthetic to the lid, then a small incision is made on the lid and the material is removed. There is a chance of leaving a permanent scar and there is also a chance that the area could become infected, but this is a very successful way of removing a chalazion.

Sincerely,

Henry Oishi, O.D.