

A chalazion is a firm round lump in the upper or lower eyelid caused by a chronic inflammation/blockage of the meibomian gland. It can sometimes be mistaken for a sty.

Eyelid glands are called the meibomian glands. There are 30-40 of these glands in each of the upper and lower lids. These glands produce an oily secretion which is mixed into the tear film of the eye and provides eye surface lubrication. The tiny openings of each of these oil or sebaceous glands are just behind the eyelashes at the lid margins of both the upper and lower eyelids.

The narrow opening through which a meibomian gland secretes its material can become clogged from narrowing of the opening or hardening of the sebaceous liquid near the opening. This can happen because of dead cells, eyelashes, inflammation or low grade infections on the eyelid surface. If this occurs, the gland will have a backup of the material it secretes and the obstructed gland will swell. This leads to thickening of the walls of the gland and leakage of oil into the lid itself, causing inflammation both within the gland and the eyelid. This inflamed enlargement is a chalazion.

A chalazion may present as an eyelid swelling or lump, eyelid tenderness or heaviness of the eyelid. Sometimes, as it presses on the surface of the eye, it can cause blurred vision.

If a chalazion is inflamed, it can cause a red, watering and sore eye

Treatment

Treatment involves cleaning and warm compresses to the eyelid. Apply a warm compress which can be used to increase drainage of the affected gland. Gently massage after warm compress to help to express the contents of the cyst.

If acutely inflamed, the patient may need antibiotic ointments and mild steroid drops for a few weeks. Please contact your doctor who will prescribe this for you if needed.

Upto 50% Chalazia will disappear with the above treatment over the course of a few months.

If conservative therapy fails, chalazia can be treated by a surgical procedure under local anaesthetic. This is called incision and curettage. The procedure can take upto 10 minutes once started. This procedure involves a surgical incision into the tarsal gland followed by curettage of the retained secretions and inflammatory material under local anaesthetic.

Disclaimer: This information leaflet is produced to help increase awareness regarding chalazion. It is not intended to replace professional medical advice or to provide advice in any special individual circumstance. Please seek expert medical advice regarding your specific medical condition.