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Blepharitis is an inflammation of the eyelids. It usually affects both lids, although one may be worse than the other one. It is a common condition and many patients have only mild symptoms or no symptoms. The symptoms include red eye, gritty, sandy feeling, foreign body sensation of the eye scaling or irritation of the eyelids, crusts on the eyelids. The symptoms may vary day to day and even vary on the same day. Blepharitis can't be cured but the symptoms can be reduced with the treatments. Fortunately blepharitis rarely causes any serious vision problems.

Treatment

1. Hot compresses and lid massage. Place a wet towel in the microwave and heat it to warm(be careful not too hot) and massage your closed eyelids with the hot towel. When the towel cools repeat for 5 minutes. As an alternative you can allow hot water to stream onto your closed eyelids for 5 minutes in the shower.

2. A mild antibiotic ointment(erythromycin) may be used at bedtime. Apply a small amount to the eyelid edges after the hot compresses. An alternative is Azasite eye drops applied to eye once a day. Both can be used for weeks or months at a time although the Azasite drop bottle is small and insurance plans may only allow a small amount each month. Sometimes a steroid/antibiotic ointment will be prescribed although it should be used for only 2-3 weeks or so. This is due to the possibility of the steroid causing an increase in eye pressure if used for more than three weeks. In addition some patients will require oral doxycycline to control the inflammation but some patients have stomach upset as a side effect.

3. Many patients with blepharitis also will have dry eyes(see dry eye handout). The treatments for dry eyes can be added to blepharitis treatment.