

## CHALAZION AND STYE

A chalazion and a stye are both lumps in or along the edge of an eyelid. In some situations it may be difficult to distinguish between a chalazion and stye.

A stye is a red, sore lump near the edge of the eyelid.

A stye often appears as a red, sore lump near the edge of the eyelid, caused by an infected eyelash follicle. When a stye occurs inside or under the eyelid, it is called an internal hordeolum.

A chalazion is an enlargement of an oil-producing gland in the eyelid. A chalazion forms when an oil-producing gland in the eyelid called the meibomian gland becomes enlarged and the gland opening becomes clogged with oil.

Chalazia tend to develop farther from the edge of the eyelid than styes. Often larger than stye, a chalazion usually isn't painful. It is not caused by an infection from bacteria, and it is not a cancer. Sometimes, when a stye doesn't heal, it can turn into a chalazion.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a stye at first generally include eyelid tenderness and redness in the affected area, with irritation and scratchiness in the eye. Further symptoms of a stye include:

- A red bump along the edge of the eyelid at the base of the eyelashes, usually with a small pus spot in the center;
- A feeling as if something is in your eye;
- Sensitivity to light;
- Crusting along the eyelid margin;
- Tearing.

About 25 percent of chalazia have no symptoms and will go away without any treatment. Sometimes, however, a chalazion may become red, swollen and occasionally may be tender. A larger chalazion may also cause blurred vision by distorting the shape of the eye. Occasionally, a chalazion can cause the entire eyelid to swell suddenly.

## WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone can develop a chalazion or stye, but if you have blepharitis, a condition affecting the eyelid margins, you may be more likely to get either one.

You may also have an increased risk of developing chalazia or styes if you:

- Have had chalazia or styes previously;
- Have skin conditions such as acne, rosacea, or seborrheic dermatitis;

- Have other systemic medical conditions, such as diabetes.
- Consistently don't remove eye makeup completely;
- Use old or contaminated cosmetics.

## CAUSES

A painful, tender sty (also called a hordeolum) is usually caused by a bacterial infection. A sty will develop at the base of an eyelash if the eyelash follicle (root) is infected. This is usually called an external hordeolum. A sty will also develop if there is an infection in one of the tiny lubricating oil glands (called meibomian glands) inside or under the eyelid. When this occurs, it is usually called an internal hordeolum. A sty can also be caused by widespread inflammation of the eyelid from blepharitis, a condition that affects the eyelid margins.

A chalazion develops when an oil gland in the eyelid becomes blocked. If an internal hordeolum doesn't drain and heal, it can turn into a chalazion. Unlike a sty, a chalazion is usually painless.

## TREATMENT

It is important not to squeeze or try to "pop" a chalazion or sty. This may spread the infection into the surrounding eyelid tissue.

Symptoms of a chalazion or sty are treated with one or more of the following methods:

- Warm compresses
  - Soak a clean washcloth in hot water and apply the cloth to the lid for 10 to 15 minutes, three or five times a day until the chalazion or sty is gone. You should repeatedly soak the cloth in hot water to maintain adequate heat. The warm compress should allow the clogged gland to open and drain white or yellow discharge. If the gland opens, gentle massage around the sty or chalazion may help drainage.
- Antibiotic ointments
  - An antibiotic ointment may be prescribed if bacteria infect a chalazion, or if a sty does not improve after treatment with warm compresses or if it keeps coming back.
- Steroid injections
  - A steroid (cortisone) injection is sometimes used to reduce swelling of a chalazion.
- Surgical removal
  - If a large chalazion or sty does not heal after other treatments or if it affects your vision, your Eye MD may need to drain it in surgery. The procedure is usually performed under local anesthesia in your ophthalmologist's office.

Chalazia and styes usually respond well to treatment, although some people tend to have them recur. If a chalazion comes back in the same place, your ophthalmologist may suggest a biopsy (where a tiny piece of tissue is surgically removed and studied) to rule out more serious problems.

Don't wear eye makeup or contact lenses until after the sty or chalazion heals.