

Styes and Chalazion

What is a stye?

The medical name for a common stye is **hordeolum**. It is a common painful eyelid problem, where a small abscess forms at the base of an eyelash.

This happens quite quickly over a few days and it appears along the edge of the eyelid due to infection in the root (follicle) of an eyelash. It may start off as a small red lump but as it develops into a little abscess (collection of pus), it looks like a yellow pus-filled spot. Other symptoms include a watery eye and a red eye or eyelid.



Why do they occur?

Styes usually occur for no apparent reason. The usual bacterium (germ) that causes the infection is called *Staphylococcus aureus*. This is a common bacterium that is often found on healthy skin, and usually does no harm, but sometimes it invades the skin to cause infections such as boils, abscesses, and styes. You are also more likely to get a stye if you have long-term Blepharitis.

What is a Chalazion?



These are also called meibomian cysts (Chalazion).

They tend to develop farther from the edge of the eyelid than styes.

They happen when a type of gland in the eyelid (meibomian gland) becomes blocked.

In some situations, it may be difficult to distinguish between a chalazion and stye.

What is the treatment for a sty?e?

Usually no treatment is necessary. Once a 'head' has formed on the sty, most burst within 3-4 days, and the tiny amount of pus drains away leaving no further problem.

- A warm compress (a cloth warmed with warm water) held against the eye encourages the sty to release pus and heal more quickly – see over for how to do this.
- Do not attempt to puncture a sty yourself
 - ♦ Take simple analgesic (such as paracetamol or ibuprofen) to relieve pain – this can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Follow the instructions on the packet/bottle carefully.

Antibiotic ointments and antibiotic medicines are not recommended for the treatment of styes.

To reduce the chance of the infection spreading:

Things you should do	Things you should not do
Always wash your hands <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Before and after touching the affected eyelid♦ Before putting your contact lenses in	Do not share face cloths/flannels or towels with anyone whilst you have a sty.
	Do not rub your eyes if you haven't recently washed your hands

Are there any complications?

Most styes clear without any treatment and cause no problems. Styes do not affect your vision. Very occasionally the infection can spread to the eye causing conjunctivitis, which may need antibiotic ointment to clear the infection.

Up to 80% of meibomian cysts resolve spontaneously, although this may take weeks (at times up to 4 weeks or few months). If the meibomian cyst does not improve or resolve after 4 weeks with conservative treatment, a referral to an ophthalmologist might be warranted.

Occasionally the eyelid can become red and swollen due to the underlying sty. You should see your GP or return to the Emergency Department for further assessment if this happens immediately.

Warm compresses (for both styes)

Warm compresses help to clear the clogged gland.

- ♦ Boil some water and let it cool a little or use water from the hot tap.
- ♦ Soak cotton wool or a clean flannel in the warm (but not boiling) water, squeeze it out
- ♦ Gently press this onto your closed eyelids for two to three minutes at a time.
- ♦ Do this for 10 to 15 minutes, three to five times a day until the stye or chalazion is gone.
- ♦ You should repeatedly soak the cloth in hot water to keep it warm. The warm compress should allow the clogged gland to open and drain white or yellow discharge.
- ♦ If the gland opens, gently massage around the stye, or chalazion, to help it drain. Starting at the skin crease, gently massage the upper lid downwards to the lashes. The lower lid should be massaged upwards towards the lashes.

If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.

If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant Emergency Department (ED)/Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU: 01443 802353 or 802349

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

References: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/styes-hordeola>

<https://www.moorfields.nhs.uk/condition/styes>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stye/>

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**