As you get older, and particularly if you have dry skin, these glands can block. Without the substance that makes the tears spread, the tears break up, and dry patches develop. These patches make the eyes feel sore or gritty. (see diet overleaf)

**What is blepharitis?**

Blepharitis is the medical term for inflamed eyelids. You may notice tired, or gritty eyes, which may be uncomfortable in sunlight or a smoky atmosphere. They may be slightly red, and feel as though there is something in them.

**What is the cause of blepharitis?**

The eyelids have tiny glands in them, especially the lower lids. These glands make substances that mix with tears, and help the tears to spread across the eye.

As you get older, and particularly if you have dry skin, these glands can block. Without the substance that makes the tears spread, the tears break up, and dry patches develop. These patches make the eyes feel sore or gritty. (see diet overleaf)

**Aims of blepharitis treatment**

Treatment is needed
- to unblock the glands in the eyelid, which may be infected and inflamed, like acne on the face or a tiny boil.
- to replace tears if the eyes are dry (dry eyes and blepharitis may occur together: see below).

The treatment should make your eyes more comfortable, but there is no magic cure. Even with treatment, your eyes may remain a little sore, but no harm will come to them and there is nothing to worry about. This is not a serious condition, and there is seldom any damage to your eyes.

- **lid cleaning**
- lubricants such as ‘Gel Tears’ or ‘Viscotears’
- antibiotic ointment if cleaning not helpful
- antibiotic tablets if severe, persistent, or very uncomfortable

**summary of lid hygiene for blepharitis**

- **1 Lid Cleaning**
  - Soak some cotton wool in warm water. Rub the cotton wool over the closed eyelids for 2-3 minutes, and repeat.

  - Then clean the edge of the lower eyelid with a cotton bud to remove scales and debris on the edge of the eyelid. Move the cotton bud along the eyelid, using a mirror, and pulling the lid away from the eyeball with the fingers of the other hand. Rub the edge of the lid gently. The warm bathing helps to soften up the scales first. It is preferable to boil the water first to sterilise it, and allow it to cool. It may be two weeks for any improvement. Bathe 2-3 times a day, gradually reducing the frequency of bathing as the eyes become more comfortable (although bathing does not help everyone). It is safe to stop cleaning, but you may need to start again if the condition returns.

  - Adding bicarbonate to the water can help. Use a teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in a pint of boiled water: this solution can be used over a week if refrigerated. Clean with a cotton bud as above.
2 Lubricants

Lubricants can be helpful to both assist the spread of your own tears and lubricate the eye, and replace tears if you have ‘dry eyes’.
- gels such as ‘Gel Tears’ or ‘Viscotears’ are usually helpful
- drops such as ‘Sno-tears’ may help.
These products are harmless: try and see if they help. You can buy them, but they can be obtained on prescription for regular use.

3 Antibiotic ointment

If the cleaning is not helpful, in addition your eyes may feel more comfortable if you use antibiotic ointment. Your GP will need to prescribe it. Try it for 3 months (chloromycetin or fucithalmic). Sometimes the condition returns once the ointment is stopped, and you may need a repeat prescription from your GP. Some people benefit using the cream intermittently.

4 Antibiotic tablets

This treatment is sometimes useful if the other treatments do not work. It is particularly effective if you have a skin condition, such as acne rosacea, or very dry skin, or if the edge of your eyelid stays red with many scales. Antibiotic tablets are NOT suitable for everyone, particularly if you use several other tablets, have stomach problems, or are pregnant. You will need to discuss this treatment with your GP first. Doxycycline 100mg a day for 1 month, then 50mg a day long term (or erythromycin). The benefit lasts several months after this treatment, stops, but the condition may recur, and you may need to use further courses if the condition returns.

In-growing eye lashes

Severe or persistent blepharitis can lead to scarring of the eyelid and eye-lashes growing in towards the eye, which they may rub. The lashes need to be removed, and there are other treatments if they are a frequent problem. Antibiotic tablets may help to eliminate the blepharitis.

Other causes of sore eyes

- Your eyes should be checked for other conditions such as glaucoma, by an optometrist; occasionally new spectacles may make the eyes more comfortable.
- You may have dry eyes or poorly spreading tears and replacement tears may help, as described.
- You may have an allergy, particularly if the eyes are itchy: try Optichrom or another anti-allergy drop.
- If your eyes remain red and very irritable an ophthalmologist will need to check your eyes in an Eye Clinic.
- Blepharitis is not serious; some people whose eyes remain sore have little medically wrong, and are in fact anxious and unduly concerned. Your GP may be able to advise.
- A healthy diet low in saturated fat, but which includes oily fish such as mackerel, sardine, salmon or tuna, (and more than 5 portions of vegetables or fruit) is very helpful.
- Blood pressure and anti-ulcer tablets also cause irritable eyes and blepharitis.
- Omega 3 supplements may help (eg flax seed oil)
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The leaflet can then be folded as shown and is easy to display. Make sure one of the pages is not upside down...this may require experimenting how pages feed into the photo copier.