

# Meibomian Cyst or Chalazion

What is a Meibomian cyst?

Each eyelid has oil producing glands (called meibomian glands) along its length. These glands open along the rim of the eyelid and add oil to the tear film. A Meibomian cyst, or Chalazion, is a blocked meibomian gland. If the oil becomes thickened it can block the opening of the gland, leading to a build-up of oil in a cyst. This often causes a lot of inflammation in the surrounding tissues, resulting in swelling, tenderness and sometimes infection. Meibomian cysts may come and go over a few days or may persist for weeks or months.



What treatments can help with a meibomian cyst?

Warm compresses – Wet a clean folded facecloth in hot water (45- 50°C eg. warm shower) and wring it out. Press it gently on closed eyelids for five minutes. The facecloth may need to be re-wet with hot water every minute to maintain the warm temperature. This softens the oil in the blocked meibomian gland, making it more likely to discharge from the cyst.

Antibiotics – Rarely are oral antibiotics required. For more severe infections an oral antibiotic may occasionally be prescribed.

Surgery – If a cyst persists for more than 4-6 weeks, a drainage of cyst procedure may be required. In adults this is performed in the clinic. Children require surgery under general anaesthetic.