

Stye

A stye (or hordeolum) develops when an eyelid gland at the base of an eyelash becomes infected. Resembling a pimple on the eyelid, a stye can grow on the inside or outside of the lid. Styes are not harmful to vision, and they can occur at any age.

Signs and symptoms of styes

A stye initially brings pain, redness, tenderness and swelling in the area, and then a small pimple appears. Sometimes just the immediate area is swollen; other times, the entire eyelid swells. You may notice frequent watering in the affected eye, a feeling like something is in the eye or increased light sensitivity.

What causes styes?

Styes are caused by staphylococcal bacteria. This bacterium is often found in the nose, and it's easily transferred to the eye by rubbing first your nose, then your eye.

Treatment for styes

Most styes heal within a few days on their own. You can encourage this process by applying hot compresses for 10 to 15 minutes, three or four times a day over the course of several days. This will relieve the pain and bring the stye to a head, much like a pimple. The stye ruptures and drains, then heals.

Never "pop" a stye like a pimple; allow it to rupture on its own. If you have frequent styes, your eye doctor may prescribe an antibiotic ointment to prevent a recurrence.

Styes formed inside the eyelid either disappear completely or (rarely) rupture on their own. This type of stye can be more serious, and may need to be opened and drained by your eyecare practitioner.

Chalazion: Another type of eyelid bump

Often mistaken for a stye, a chalazion is an enlarged, blocked oil gland in the eyelid. A chalazion mimics a stye for the first few days, and then turns into a painless hard, round bump later on. Most chalazia develop further from the eyelid edge than styes.

Although the same treatment speeds the healing of a chalazion, the bump may linger for one to several months. If the chalazion remains after several months, your eye doctor may drain it or inject a steroid to facilitate healing.

Article ©2012 Access Media Group LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction other than for one-time personal use is strictly prohibited.