

Styes and Chalazia (Eyelid Lumps)



What Is a Stye or Chalazion?

A stye is a red, painful bump near the edge of the eyelid. It usually forms when an oil gland gets blocked and inflamed. Styes can be sore and swollen, like a small pimple.

If the swelling lasts, the stye may turn into a chalazion—a painless lump in the eyelid. Chalazia happen when the body's immune system walls off the inflamed gland.

You may notice:

- A small, firm bump on the eyelid
- Mild tenderness or redness
- Irritated or watery eyes
- A scratchy feeling, like something is in your eye
- Flaky skin or dandruff-like crusts on the lashes

Why Do They Happen?

Eyelids have oil glands that help keep your eyes moist and comfortable. When the oil gets too thick or sticky, it can clog the gland. That's when swelling and irritation can start.

This is more likely if you:

- Have rosacea or blepharitis
- Touch or rub your eyes often
- Don't remove makeup fully
- Have oily skin or dandruff

How Are They Treated?

Warm Compresses

The main treatment is applying a warm, damp cloth to the eyelid several times a day. This helps soften the oil, open the gland, and reduce the lump. It's called eyelid hygiene.

You can also:

- Gently clean the eyelid with baby shampoo or lid wipes
- Avoid squeezing the lump
- Use artificial tears if the eye feels dry

Medication or Procedures

Sometimes your doctor may prescribe:

- Antibiotic drops or ointment (for infection)
- Steroid injection (to reduce inflammation)
- Surgical drainage (if the lump is large or won't go away)

Risks and Considerations

All treatments carry some risks. These may include:

- Bruising or infection after a procedure
- Scarring or recurrence of the lump
- Bleeding

Let your doctor know if you take blood thinners, as they can increase the risk of bleeding.

Most styes and chalazia go away with simple care. But if they don't, your oculofacial plastic surgeon may recommend treatment to improve comfort and appearance.

Summary

Styes and chalazia are common and usually not serious. Warm compresses and gentle eyelid care can help them heal. If the lump sticks around or gets worse, talk to your doctor about other options.

The Oculofacial Society is the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (ASOPRS) public-facing website for patients and referring physicians. To learn more about the services provided by ASOPRS members, visit www.oculofacialsociety.org.

ASOPRS is a professional medical society dedicated to advancing education, research, and the quality of clinical practice in aesthetic, plastic, and reconstructive surgery of the face, orbits, eyelids, and lacrimal system.