

## STYES

A stye (external hordeolum) is an infection or small abscess ("boil") around one or more of the "roots" of your eyelashes. It is most commonly caused by staphylococcus bacteria. As troublesome as they may be, styes do not threaten your eyesight, and their presence doesn't not mean that you need glasses.

### *Symptoms*

You may first become aware of an aching, tenderness, or "fullness" in the eyelid, followed in a day or so by some swelling and redness. Later, a small bump forms on the edge of the lid. If you look in the mirror, you will see that the bump has one or more eyelashes in the center of it. As the bump grows over the next few days, it may form a "head" or "point" in the center and may drain a little pus, which dries to form little bits of crust on the lashes.

### *Treatment*

The usual treatment is to use warm compresses on the eyelid two or three times a day. Moderate heat hastens the healing process by increasing circulation to the infected area.

If there is a head on the stye, it will usually drain by itself. Do not squeeze on the stye to help drain it; that risks spreading the infection and can actually be dangerous. Rarely, you will need to have the lash pulled to help drain the pus. This is not painful, as the head of any abscess is dead skin that has no nerve sensation. Medications are usually not necessary, though sometimes antibiotic eye drops and/or ointment may be prescribed for the affected eye.

During treatment, do not wear eyeliner or mascara. Discard any brushes and containers that have been recently used because they may be contaminated with bacteria that caused the infection.

If you have repeated attacks of styes, you may be given oral antibiotics for 7 to 10 days in an attempt to fight the bacteria on the eyelids. If recurring, styes are associated with chronic skin problems and blepharitis (lid inflammation); you may require a complete medical workup and body and scalp treatment.