

Stye

A stye is an infection in the root of an eyelash. This swells and gets filled with pus and is seen as a small red lump on the edge of an eyelid. The eyelid becomes sore. The infection may spread along the eyelid and the whole lid may become red and inflamed. Some yellow pus may be seen in a tiny spot where the affected eyelash sticks out of the eyelid.

What causes styes?

A stye usually occurs for no apparent reason. The usual bacterium (bug) that causes the infection is the staphylococcus. This is a common bacterium that is often found on healthy skin. It usually does no harm but sometimes it invades the skin to cause infections such as boils, abscesses, styes, etc.

What is the treatment for a stye?

- *No treatment* - is often necessary. Most styes burst and the tiny amount of pus drains away leaving no further problem.
- *Hot compresses* - may help to ease soreness and clear the pus. Hold a clean flannel that has been in hot water gently but firmly against the closed eye. Do this for about 20 minutes 3-4 times a day. (The water should be hot but comfortable and not scalding.)
- *An antibiotic ointment* - may be prescribed if it is not clearing.
- *An antibiotic medicine* - may be needed if the infection does not clear with the above measures.

To reduce the chance of the infection spreading

- Don't share facecloths/flannels or towels with anyone whilst you have a stye.
- Always wash your hands after touching the affected eyelid.

Will it happen again?

Most styes are one-off events. However, some people seem prone to getting them. At the first sign of a stye, try hot compresses as described above. This may 'nip it in the bud'.

