



STYE

A **stye**, also known as a **hordeolum**, is an acute bacterial infection of the eyelid margin that affects the eyelash roots and/or the glands located into the eyelid edges .

Styes are among the most common eyelid lesions in clinical practice. They are not serious but may be rather painful until they heal^{2,3} .

Styes are frequently confused with **chalazia**, which is also a lump on the eyelid but do not result from an infection⁴ . More information on **chalazia** can be found in this [fact sheet](#).



Itchy eyes



Red eyes



Watery Eyes

CAUSES

WHAT CAN CAUSE A STYE?

A stye is caused by bacteria, mainly staphylococcal¹, which are normally present on the skin and are responsible for most skin infections.



Styes are mostly external, involving the infection of an eyelash root and its associated oil glands (*glands of Zeiss and Moll*) . Less frequently, styes may be internal, with the infected part being a Meibomian gland (another kind of oily gland) .

Some risk factors favor the development of styes, such as^{1,5} :

- **Hygiene issues:** insufficient hygiene of contact lenses, insufficient hand hygiene, improper eye makeup removal, or using eye makeup that is old or contaminated, rubbing the eyes too often,
- **Local underlying conditions:** chronic dry eye disease, blepharitis, inflammation or infection of the eyelids, rosacea, seborrheic dermatitis,
- **General illnesses such as diabetes or an immune deficiency**, that encourages infection.

Some people are prone to repeated styes.

SYMPTOMS

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A STYE?

Styes are small abscesses: therefore, an external stye will present as a red lump at the base of an eyelash. A small pus spot can appear at the center of the bump .

Internal styes are less obvious, and may appear as a mere red, swelling of the eyelid.

Stye is usually very painful³, and in addition, there may be a feeling of something in the eye or itching or an oversensitivity to light⁴. Vision should not be affected .

The eye may be watery or there may be crustiness along the eyelids edge⁴ .

A stye usually only affects 1 eye, but it's possible to have more than one at a time and on both eyes³ .

At times, the abscess bursts and, in external styes, a small amount of pus is visibly released from the lump, while in internal styes, pus exude on the inner surface of the eyelid, and may be unnoticed⁶ .

DIAGNOSTIC

HOW TO DIAGNOSE A STYE PROBLEM?

The diagnosis is based on history and clinical examination², and no diagnostic tests are required or useful¹.

TREATMENT

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR STYES?

A stye is usually a self-limiting condition with spontaneous resolution occurring within 1 or 2 weeks^{1,2}.



Both internal and external styes are treated similarly¹. Warming and gentle cleansing of the affected eyelid are the best treatment. Warmth helps the stye to come to a head, rupture and spontaneously drain .

Painkillers help reduce the pain.

Antibiotics applied directly to the eye are sometimes prescribed to treat styes, but they usually provide little or no help, as most styes tend to resolve by themselves. Sometimes, oral antibiotics are given if the infection is spreading in the surrounding tissues .

For an external stye, centered around a lash follicle, the lash can be pulled to enhance drainage², but this must be done only by a health professional with appropriate antiseptic measures to avoid infection spreading . If the stye is large or if it is refractory to medical therapy, incision and drainage under local anesthesia, performed by an ophthalmologist, may be considered² .

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STYE AND CHALAZION?

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CAN I MANAGE A STYE BY MYSELF?

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WHEN SHALL I SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR A STYE?

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IF I AM PRONE TO STYES, WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THEM FROM RECURRING?

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IS A STYE CONTAGIOUS?

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