

Stye (Hordeolum)

A stye is an infection causing a red, swollen bump on the eyelid. It occurs when the glands under the skin of the eyelid become infected. Treatment, possibly including antibiotics, is important to prevent the infection from spreading.

What is a stye?

A stye is an infection of the glands under the skin of the eyelid, at the base of the eyelashes. The medical term is “hordeolum.” Styes can be quite irritating, and there is a risk that the infection will spread.

Treatment usually consists of frequent soaks with a warm washcloth. Your doctor may recommend an antibiotic ointment as well. If the stye doesn’t go away within a few days, or if it seems to be getting worse, call our office.

What does it look like?

- A red, tender, swollen bump on the edge of the eyelid. You may be able to see the infected gland on the eyelid or it may be under the skin.
- The infection may quickly become quite large and painful.
- The eyes are teary. Your child may feel like there’s something in the eye.

What causes a stye?

One or more glands under the skin of the eyelid become infected, most often with “staph” bacteria.

What are some possible complications of a stye?

The infection may enlarge and spread. This can lead to a more serious infection of the skin of the eyelid and surrounding area (cellulitis).

What puts your child at risk of a stye?

- Anything that irritates the eye, including frequent rubbing, eye makeup, or contact lenses, may increase the risk of infection. However, most styes occur without such risk factors.
- Other infections of the eyelid (such as blepharitis) may increase the risk of styes.

Can styes be prevented?

Good hygiene, including regular washing of the face and hands, may reduce the risk of styes.

How are styes treated?

- *Warm soaks.* Soak a washcloth in warm water and place it over the eye. Keep the warm washcloth on the eye for 10 minutes or so, a few times per day. This will reduce pain and help the stye to heal faster.
- *Antibiotics.* Your doctor may recommend an antibiotic ointment, especially if the stye is large or painful. Follow the doctor’s instructions for using this medication.
- *Keep the area clean.* Discourage your child from touching or squeezing the area. The stye will eventually clear up on its own. Your child should stop wearing eye makeup and contact lenses until the stye has healed.
- *Surgery.* If needed, a minor surgical procedure can be done to drain the stye.

When should I call your office?

Call our office if:

- The stye does not clear up within a week or so.
- The stye seems to be getting worse; that is, the area of redness and tenderness gets larger.
- Your child has eye pain or any change in vision.