

Current itchy eye treatments barely scratch the surface

New technology offers better way to cure blepharitis
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SYMPTOM—Blepharitis doesn't always show up as a red and swollen eyelid. Sometimes the itchiness can persist in normal-looking eyes.

Not all itchy eye problems can be solved with the squirt of an eyedrop. More than 80-million Americans suffer from blepharitis, a chronic inflammation of the eyelid that causes incessant itching, redness and swelling.

The most common factor leading to blepharitis is a buildup of bacteria that blocks the oil glands in the eyelid.

Also known as meibomian gland dysfunction, the condition occurs when the eyelid glands don't produce enough oil (meibum), the oil is of poor quality, or the oil glands are blocked.

There is no cure for the condition, medical experts say, but patients can manage the condition through regular use of warm compresses that help soften the crusty buildup and loosen the oily debris. Regular cleaning of the eyelid surface also helps. Even then, the itchiness often returns and the cycle of rubbing and scratching returns.

Today's science offers a better, longer lasting way to attack the problem.

The technology centers around use of a heat therapy device, similar to a pair of goggles, that is placed around the patient's eyes. The in-office treatment using an OCuSOFT Thermal 1-Touch device emits approximately 20 minutes of high heat and gentle massage action to the eye area.

The procedure applies constant, targeted heat to the top and bottom eyelids, followed by gentle pressure to help remove the bacterial microfilm and release the lipids, which is the fatty material clogged under the eyelid surface.

The treatment also helps stimulate blood flow and improve tear production.

The patient sits in a recliner chair in a dark room and is offered headset music while the treatment takes place. The digital heating device placed over the eyes has different temperature control modes, which are set according to the condition of the eye.

Dr. Rajesh Khanna, a board-certified ophthalmologist who offers the advanced treatment at his Village Center Road office in Westlake Village, describes the process.

"Before using the Digi-Lens heater, we need to clean the eyelids using OCuSOFT Lid Scrub plus Swabstix," he said.

"After heating and humidification of the meibomian gland, we massage and squeeze the glands to gently remove the debris and clogged oil from the lid margin using a Mastrotta paddle to help express the meibomian gland.

"Lastly, we clean the lid margin using the Lid Scrub PLUS Swabstix," Khanna said.

Dry eye disease is quite common today, especially in Southern California due to the hot, dry climate and ultraviolet radiation to which people are subjected.

"It's become necessary to come up with a treatment which will last longer," Khanna said. "In-office thermal heat therapy is a game-changer in management for chronic dry eyes. It yields higher localized temperatures than face masks used at home. It's also more economical than some other expensive options."

Between treatments it is important to keep the eyelids clean in order to reduce blepharitis reoccurrence, says Khanna, who can be reached at (805) 230-2126. Also go to khannainstitute.com.

At the very least, says Khanna, it is important to keep the eyelids clean. And while using warm compresses and baby shampoo diluted in warm water to scrub the eyelids and eyelashes daily, making use of the OCuSOFT eyewear treatment a couple of times a year is the best way to keep the condition under control.

—John Loesing

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