

# Chalazion

## What Is Chalazion?

The term chalazion (pronounced *kah-la'-ze-on*) comes from a Greek word meaning a small lump. It refers to a swelling in the eyelid caused by chronic inflammation of one of the small oil producing glands (meibomian glands) located in the upper and lower eyelids.

This eye condition can start with a bacterial infection in the meibomian glands of the eyelids. Bacteria such as *Staphylococcus epidermis* and *Staphylococcus aureus* are located on the skin and can be swept into the glands when you rub your eyes. In addition, a chalazion can form following a case of blepharitis. Blepharitis is the chronic inflammation of the eyelids and almost everyone above the age of 60 has it. Individuals with rosacea have a higher risk of developing blepharitis upon rubbing the eyes.

A chalazion is sometimes confused with a sty which also appears as a lump in the eyelid. A sty is an acute inflammatory infection of a lash follicle and forms a red, sore lump near the edge of the eyelid. A chalazion is usually a reaction to trapped oil secretions and not caused by bacteria, although the site can become secondarily infected by bacteria. After the infection has been treated and cleared, the chalazion becomes a painless, aseptic lump of inflammatory reminance. Chalazions tend to occur farther from the edge of the eyelid than styes (although a gradual swelling can be felt near the edge of the lid), and tend to “point” toward the inside of nose side of the eyelid. Occasionally, a chalazion can cause the entire eyelid to swell suddenly.

In order to determine if there is an infection, if you apply pressure on the lump, you should feel pain. If there is no infection, there should be no sensation of pain.

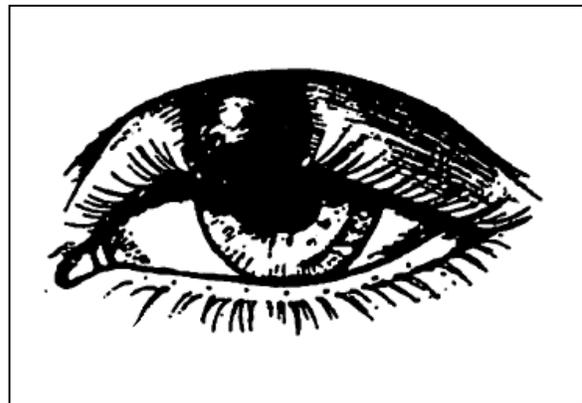


Fig. 1 - Chalazion

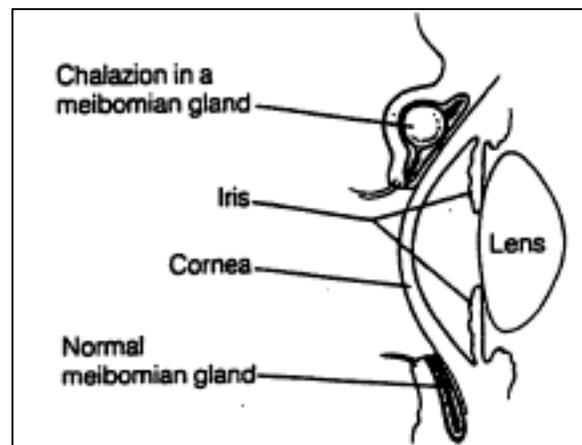


Fig. 2 Cross section of eye with Chalazion in Upper Eyelid

## How is a Chalazion Treated?

When a chalazion is small and without symptoms, it may disappear on its own. Usually, they don't disappear without treatment. If the chalazion is large, it may cause blurred vision by distorting the shape of the eye.



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Chalazions may be treated with any one or a combination of the following methods:

- 1) Antibiotic and/or steroid drops or injections;
- 2) Warm compresses;

Warm compresses can be applied in a variety of ways. The simplest way is to hold a clean washcloth, soaked in hot water, against the closed lid for five to ten minutes, three to four times a day. Repeatedly soak the washcloth in hot water to maintain adequate heat. This method is effective because it dilates the surrounding blood vessels which bring more blood to the site in order to take away the remanence.

- 3) Massage or expression of the glandular secretions;
- 4) Surgical incision or excision.

Chalazions usually respond well to treatment, although some people are prone to recurrences and may require continuing medication. If a Chalazion recurs in the same place, your ophthalmologist may suggest a biopsy to rule out more serious problems. Normally, it takes 6-12 months for a chalazion to go away.