



Information about

# Chalazion



## **What is a chalazion?**

A chalazion (say kuh-lay-zee-on) or chalazia (plural) (say kuh-lay-zee-ah) is a harmless cyst in the eye lid, that arises from a blocked "oil producing gland" called Meibomian gland.

Meibomian glands are sebaceous gland (like the one on the skin, that causes 'acne'), that are located in the eyelid. They secrete oil that helps to moisten the eye. There are about 25-30 glands in each upper and lower lid and they open close to the eyelash.

When the opening of this gland gets blocked, the secretions get trapped inside and the gland enlarges. This causes pea sized or larger lumps on the eyelid.

## **How does a chalazion present?**

A chalazion presents as gradually enlarging round, firm lump in the upper or lower lid. They can present in one eye or both eyes. There may be multiple lumps.

They do not interfere with vision but in rare cases, a very large cyst can press on the cornea (window of the eye) and cause blurred vision.

Some children are more prone to this cyst, than others and it can occur in any age group. Hormones play an important role in recurring Chalazia.

People with Rosacea, Atopy, Seborrhea and Eczema are more prone to Chalazia.

## **Is Chalazion, an infection?**

Chalazion is not an infection. It is a blocked gland that has trapped secretions inside.

## **Is Chalazion the same as a sty?**

Styes, are painful red lumps that grow on the eyelid margin arising from eye lash follicle or under the lid as a result of bacterial infection. They usually resolve with warm compresses and anti-biotics given orally or as eye drops.

# How do you treat Chalazion?

In the vast majority of cases, chalazion resolve on its own without treatment.

## The following can help

- **Warm compresses:** Use a wet clean washcloth or flannel with warm water (bearable heat), squeeze off the excess water and gently hold it over the affected lid for 15 minutes. Doing this two to three times a day encourages the trapped secretions to melt and the opening of the gland to enlarge.
- **Massage:** Gentle massage to the lids using slight pressure can help open the blocked gland. The direction of massage should be towards the lash. E.g. downwards for the upper lid and upwards for the lower lid.
- **Good hygiene:** Cleaning the lids, by massaging diluted baby shampoo during bath times can clear the gland openings.
- **Antibiotics** are not usually recommended for the treatment of Chalazion. But sometimes a shortcourse is prescribed if the lump causes discomfort.
- **Flaxseed** taken orally can lessen the recurrence of chalazion.

# Is Surgery advised for Chalazion?

If the cyst is very large and remains for a more than 12 months, surgery can release the trapped secretions. However, in children this is not recommended because:

- The cyst is harmless and usually disappear over time
- Surgery requires the child to be put to sleep (with anesthesia), and that carries risk to general health
- Rare risks of surgery include infection and scarring
- There is 1 in 5 chance that residual cyst remains, as the surgery only removes the trapped secretions and does not do anything to the size of the gland

- Surgery does not prevent another cyst from arising from another or same gland, whereas non-surgical measures help in preventing cyst recurrence

## **How long does a Chalazion take to heal?**

A chalazion can easily take months to reduce in size. They are harmless and can be safely left to get better with time.

The reduction in the size of the lump and when the lump becomes 'Better felt than seen' is a sign that it is healing. It is a good idea to monitor the lump by pictures over a period of time so that you can identify the changes over time.

## **Can chalazion burst?**

Yes. In rare instances, a very large chalazion can open up on its own to discharge its secretions.

## **What to look out for when there is a chalazion?**

- Any redness in the white of the eye or around the eye
- Blurred vision
- Very noticeable swelling and redness that spreads

It is important to get medical help from your nearest optometrist, GP or emergency services on such occurrences.

## **Can a chalazion be prevented?**

There is some evidence that good lid hygiene, reduced eye rubbing and flaxseed have a role in minimising the recurrence of chalazion.