



Jane Dickerman M.D.

## Lid Margin Disease

Lid margin disease is a common and frequently chronic inflammation of the eyelids. Symptoms include irritation, itching, and, occasionally, a red eye. This condition frequently occurs in people who tend to have oily skin, dandruff, dry eyes or rosacea.

Bacteria normally reside on the skin, but in some people, they thrive in the skin at the base of the eyelashes. Nearby oil glands may be overactive, causing dandruff-like scales and particles to form along the lashes and eyelid margins, which can cause redness, stinging, or burning.

Lid margin disease cannot be cured, but it can be controlled with a few simple, daily hygienic measures, such as the following:

- At least twice a day, place a warm, wet washcloth over your closed eyelids for a minute. Rewet it as it cools, two or three times. This will soften and loosen scales and debris. More important, it helps liquefy the oily secretions from the eyelids' oil glands, which helps prevent the development of a **chalazion**, an inflamed lump in an eyelid oil gland.
- With your finger covered with a thin, wet washcloth, cotton swab, or commercial lint-free pad, gently scrub the base of the lashes for about 15 seconds per lid.

When medications are necessary, they may include:

- artificial tears (over-the-counter eyedrops) to relieve symptoms of dry eye;
- antibiotics (oral or topical) to decrease bacteria on the eyelids; and
- steroids (short-term), to decrease inflammation.

Medications alone are not sufficient to control lid margin disease; the application of warmth and detailed cleansing of the lashes daily is the key.