Sty

A sty (*hordeolum*) is an infection of a gland in the eyelid located at the base of the eyelash. A sty may develop a white or yellow head of pus. It can be puffy (*swollen*). Usually, the sty will burst and pus will come out on its own. They do not leave lumps in the eyelid once they drain.

A sty is often confused with another form of cyst of the eyelid called a *chalazion*. Chalazions occur within the eyelid and not on the edge where the bases of the eyelashes are. They often are red, sore and then form firm lumps in the eyelid.

CAUSES

- Germs (*bacteria*).
- Lasting (*chronic*) eyelid inflammation.

SYMPTOMS

- Tenderness, redness and swelling along the edge of the eyelid at the base of the eyelashes.
- Sometimes, there is a white or yellow head of pus. It may or may not drain.

DIAGNOSIS

An ophthalmologist will be able to distinguish between a sty and a chalazion and treat the condition appropriately.

TREATMENT

- Styes are typically treated with warm packs (*compresses*) until drainage occurs.
- In rare cases, medicines that kill germs (*antibiotics*) may be prescribed. These antibiotics may be in the form of drops, cream or pills.
- If a hard lump has formed, it is generally necessary to do a small incision and remove the hardened contents of the cyst in a minor surgical procedure done in the office.
- In suspicious cases, your caregiver may send the contents of the cyst to the lab to be certain that it is not a rare, but dangerous form of cancer of the glands of the eyelid.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash your hands often and dry them with a clean towel. Avoid touching your eyelid. This may spread the infection to other parts of the eye.
- Apply heat to your eyelid for 10 to 20 minutes, several times a day, to ease pain and help to heal it faster.
- **Do not** squeeze the sty. Allow it to drain on its own. Wash your eyelid carefully 3 to 4 times per day to remove any pus.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The eye becomes painful or puffy (*swollen*).
- Your vision changes.
- The sty does not drain by itself within 3 days.
- The sty comes back within a short period of time, even with treatment.
- There is redness (*inflammation*) around the eye.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 101° F (38.3° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.

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