

CHALAZION or HORDEOLUM

What is a Chalazion?

The term chalazion 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.

A chalazion is sometimes confused with a sty, which also appears as a lump in the eyelid. A stye is an *acute* inflammatory infection of an eyelash follicle and forms a red, sore lump near the edge of the eyelid. A chalazion is usually a reaction to trapped oil secretions and is not caused by bacteria. It is possible, however, to develop a secondary infection with bacteria.

How is a Chalazion treated?

When a chalazion is small and without symptoms, it may disappear without any treatment. If the chalazion is large, it may cause blurred vision by distorting the shape of the eye. A chalazion may be treated by any one (or more) of the following methods:

1. Antibiotic or steroid drops or injections.
2. Warm compresses: these may be applied in a variety of ways. The simplest way is to hold a clean washcloth, soaked in hot water, against the closed eyelid for 5-10 minutes, 3-4 times per day. Repeatedly soak the washcloth in hot water to maintain adequate heat.
3. Oral antibiotics (either short or long-term)
4. Surgical excision of the chalazion itself.

Chalazia (*plural!*) usually respond well to treatment, although some people are prone to recurrences and may require continuing medication. If a chalazion continues to recur in the same place, your ophthalmologist may suggest a biopsy to rule out more serious problems.

Overall, while chalazia and hordeola are a nuisance, they rarely lead to vision or eye-threatening disease. Please talk to Dr. Miller if you have any questions or concerns.