

Trichiasis

Information for patients

What is trichiasis?

Trichiasis is the term used to describe misdirected eyelashes. If they turn inwards towards the eye, they can cause problems including increased risk of infection and generally removal is advised.

What causes trichiasis?

Injury, inflammation or previous surgery to the eyelid can cause the eyelashes to grow in the wrong direction.

What are the symptoms of trichiasis?

You may experience:

- Foreign body sensation, like there is something in your eye
- A sore and red eye
- Watering of the eye, or sticky discharge
- Rarely, reduced vision due to damage to the cornea (clear part of the front of the eye)

What can you do to help?

You can use artificial tears to keep the eye comfortable. These may have been prescribed during your appointment today but are also available over-the-counter from your local pharmacy. Your pharmacist will be able to give you advice on the most suitable ones.

How can it be treated?

The treatment will depend on the cause and number of eyelashes involved. Your doctor will discuss the most suitable option for you.

Treatment options include:

- Epilation – eyelashes are plucked out. This is a temporary solution
- Electrolysis – a fine probe is inserted into the lash root and an electrical or radiofrequency current is passed through it, causing destruction of lash root
- Cryotherapy – a freezing probe is placed on the eyelid skin below the lashes, causing destruction of the lash roots

Epilation

This is a simple procedure whereby the misdirected eyelashes are plucked out using specialised tweezer instruments. This is not a permanent treatment.

What are the risks of epilation?

- Need for further treatment – the treated lashes will regrow in about 4 to 6 weeks and the epilation will need to be repeated every 4 to 6 weeks long term
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Electrolysis

The procedure is usually done under local anaesthetic, which means you will be awake during the operation; however, you will have an injection into the affected eyelid to numb the area and eye drops to make you feel more comfortable.

A fine probe is inserted into the lash root and an electrical or radiofrequency current is passed through it, causing destruction of the lash root. Electrolysis provides a more permanent solution as it prevents the treated lashes from re-growing, but treatment may need to be repeated multiple times to obtain a satisfactory result. It is important that you do not have your eyelashes plucked out for at least 6 weeks prior to treatment, as only visible lashes can be treated with electrolysis.

What are the risks of electrolysis?

- Bruising and swelling of the eyelids – this usually settles within a few days
- Scarring – this can cause changes to the lid margin/ edge
- Need for further treatment – only visible lashes can be treated, multiple treatments maybe needed to treat all misdirected lashes

Cryotherapy

The procedure is usually done under local anaesthetic, which means you will be awake during the operation; however, you will have an injection into the affected eyelid to numb the area and eye drops to make you feel more comfortable.

A freezing probe is placed on the eyelid skin below the lashes, causing destruction of the lash roots. This provides a more permanent solution as it prevents the treated lashes from re-growing, but treatment may need to be repeated multiple times to obtain a satisfactory result. It is important that you do not have your eyelashes plucked out for at least 6 weeks prior to treatment.

What are the risks of cryotherapy?

- Bruising, swelling and redness of the eyelids – this usually settles within a few weeks
- Scarring – this can cause changes to the lid margin/ edge
- Need for further treatment –multiple treatments maybe needed to treat all misdirected lashes

What happens after treatment?

You should continue using regular lubricating eye drops. You will have a follow up appointment in the eye clinic (this maybe a telephone or video appointment) and further treatment can be planned if needed.

If you choose not to have treatment, what could happen?

The misdirected eyelashes are unlikely to improve without treatment. There is ongoing risk of damage to the surface of the eye (cornea) from the eyelashes rubbing against it, this can lead to infections which can cause permanent reduction in vision.


Please use this space to write any notes or questions you may have

Further information and advice can be obtained from:

British Oculoplastic Surgery Society

<https://www.bopss.co.uk/public-information/common-conditions/>

NHS 111
NHS Choices online

 **111**
www.nhs.uk

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Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

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