What can I do for the stye on my eye? [1]

Hi Alice,

What do you do for a stye on your eye? It's swelled almost shut.

Answer

Dear Reader,

A stye, a red, irritated, tender, swollen bump in the corner or hair follicle of the eyelid, is caused by an infection of the glands at the edge of the eyelid. The same staph bacteria that lives on the skin and causes skin infection causes styes.

Although most styes go away on their own within a few days, you can apply hot compresses four times daily for 15 minutes at a time to soothe the stye and possibly help it resolve more quickly. Sometimes, antibiotic ointments or drops are necessary. If the infection spreads, a health care provider may need to surgically lance or drain the area, or s/he may prescribe systemic (oral) antibiotics.

Because you describe your eye as being swelled almost shut, pay a visit to your health care provider as soon as possible to make sure that what you're experiencing is really a simple stye, or something else. Management and treatment of your condition will depend on the diagnosis.

If you are susceptible to developing styes, you might try cleaning your eyelid with a clean, warm cloth a couple times a day, in an effort to avoid developing another stye. Try not to touch or rub your eye during the day, because you may spread the infection within that eyelid. Although styes are not generally considered to be likely to spread to your other eye or to be contagious between people, careful, frequent handwashing with soap will help prevent the spread of infection.

Alice!

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