

How do you know when to seek treatment?

Some eyelid lumps and bumps can resemble one another, so it may not be apparent whether a growth is benign or malignant.

Any eyelid growth, lesion, or lump that is changing, growing, painful, bleeding, or swollen, should be examined. Your physician will offer appropriate treatment options.

Many eyelid lumps and bumps are easily and quickly excised, so they can be removed on an outpatient basis. No hospitalization is necessary.

The procedure takes little time and trouble. In fact, it is often possible to perform surgery on the same day as your examination, if you need it.

Health insurance covers most of the cost of excising lumps and bumps as long as they are not strictly cosmetic in nature.

We also offer cosmetic facial skin tag and benign lesion removals that are generally not covered by insurance.

Types of lumps and bumps

Some of the more common eyelid lumps and bumps can be categorized into three general types: benign, inflammatory, and malignant.

• Benign

A nevus is a small, usually round and pigmented benign tumor, made up of specific cells, called nevus cells. It can be thought of as a mole. Changing nevi should be checked for evidence of malignancy, to rule out melanoma.

A papilloma is a small "warty" epidermal skin growth which is generally benign, but often cosmetically unsightly. You should discuss with your doctor the possibility of removing such masses, if this is desired.

Other benign lesions include seborrheic keratoses and inclusion cysts (small cystic masses). Please consult your doctor about masses that bother you.

• Inflammatory

A hordeolum, commonly called a sty, is an inflamed swelling of a sebaceous (oil) gland of the eyelid caused by a bacterial infection.

If it is superficial, a hordeolum appears as an elevated tender pustule, much like a pimple, usually near the lid edge. If it lies deep, the swelling often involves the whole eyelid. The area of inflammation is red, swollen, and painful.

A chalazion is a chronic inflammation of an eyelid gland that results in the formation of a hard lump. A chalazion may result from a hordeolum that does not resolve and chalazia often occur in association with blepharitis. (See our Blepharitis brochure for a detailed description of this condition.)

• Malignant

Malignant tumors, or skin cancers, are common around the eye. Prolonged exposure to sunlight, especially during youth, and fair skin type are factors in the development of skin cancers, each with different characteristics.

Basal cell carcinomas are the most common type of skin cancer occurring on the eyelid. They arise in skin around the eyes, most often as a nodule on the lower lid.

Squamous cell cancers occur in the eyelid region, most commonly on the conjunctiva.

Only about one percent of eyelid malignancies are sebaceous gland carcinomas. They are highly malignant, yet they closely resemble other benign conditions. If left untreated, sebaceous gland carcinomas may have a high mortality rate. These cancers need to be promptly diagnosed and excised completely.

Any eyelid growth that bothers you is worth having checked. At the least, diagnosis affords peace of mind. Most of these growths are easily treated or may be removed using a simple surgical procedure.