

## UNIVERSITY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES • Fact Sheet

**STYE (HORDEOLUM)****WHAT IS IT?**

A stye (or hordeolum) is a red, painful lump that can occur on the upper or lower eyelid. Lesions may be internal (just inside the edge of the eyelid) or external (on the outer surface at the base of the eyelashes). Most styes are harmless to the eye and do not affect vision.

**WHAT CAUSES IT?**

Styes occur when oil glands on the edge of the eyelid become inflamed or infected. External lesions may also be caused by infected eyelash follicles. You are at greater risk for developing a stye if you do not wash your hands prior to touching your eyes, you leave on eye make-up overnight, or you do not replace eye make-up regularly.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

A stye typically presents as a red, painful lump on the edge of the eyelid that develops over a few days. It can look like a pimple.

Other symptoms may include:

- Eyelid swelling, redness, and/or pain.
- Tearing.
- Scratchy or irritated feeling in the eye (less common).

**HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?**

Your medical provider will ask questions about your symptoms and examine your eye. No special testing is needed to make a diagnosis.

**HOW IS IT TREATED?**

Most styes get better on their own after a few days to a week.

- Warm compresses to the eyelid are key to draining the stye and decreasing pain.
  - Compresses should be applied for at least 10 minutes, 4 times a day.
  - Use either a warm washcloth (sealing it in a Ziploc bag will help it retain heat) or a plastic bag filled with warm mashed potatoes.
- Antibiotic ointment or drops may be prescribed if the stye does not resolve with warm compresses.
- Do not wear contact lenses or eye make-up until the stye has fully healed.
- Avoid squeezing or picking at the stye as this can lead to new or worsening infection.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially before and after contact with your eye.

**CALL FOR A FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT IF...**

- Your stye does not resolve after a week of warm compresses.
- Your stye gets bigger or starts to bleed.
- The redness or swelling spreads to a large portion of the eyelid or other parts of your face.
- The whites of your eye become red.
- Your vision is affected.

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:** [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org), [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org)