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# Eyelid Dermatitis

The term eyelid dermatitis refers to a condition where there is redness, flaky skin and usually a burning or itchy sensation. The most common cause is related to something coming in contact with the skin in that area. This is a form of contact dermatitis. It also occurs from some forms of eczema, psoriasis and a condition called seborrheic dermatitis. Skin infections less commonly cause eyelid rashes.

## Try to identify the cause.

Many things can cause eyelid contact dermatitis including:

Soaps, shampoo, hair conditioners, makeup, sunscreens, contact lens solutions, eyedrops, false eyelashes, metal eyelash curlers & tweezers, perfumes, swim goggles and airborne allergens such as pollen, cat dander and hair sprays. Things on your pillow where you rest your head at night may also trigger eyelid dermatitis.

It is important to note that you might have something on your hands that gets on your eyelid skin that causes the rash. For example hand creams, nail polish, and residue from touching foods, vegetation, cleaning products and metals have been shown to cause eyelid dermatitis even though the skin on the hands and fingers is unaffected. As mentioned above, shampoos and conditioner can cause eyelid dermatitis without necessarily affecting the scalp. This is because the eyelid skin is much more sensitive to chemicals than is the skin on the scalp and hands. So avoid touching the eyelid area.

## Treatment

- 1) Avoid rubbing or scratching at the area. Remember that sometimes chemical allergens on the hands cause the problem when you touch your eyes with your fingers.
- 2) Cool water on a clean washcloth applied to the skin can provide immediate relief of the itch.
- 3) Minimize what you put on your eyes, until you have identified and eliminated the causative agent.
- 4) Wash your face with water only.
- 5) Use Free & Clear shampoo as a substitute, available at Walgreens and other pharmacies.
- 6) You can try over the counter ½% hydrocortisone ointment twice daily for relief for a week or two. The ointment form is less likely to worsen the irritated skin compared to the ointment that has a more soothing effect. If no better, or worse in a few days, or if not resolved in a week or two, seek out medical advice.
- 7) Use a small amount of unscented white petrolatum (Vaseline) to moisturize and sooth the irritation.
- 8) When the above is inadequate a health care provider may prescribe a more potent cortisone, or another medicine like tacrolimus (Protopic) or pimecrolimus (Elidel). You should avoid using prescription strength steroid creams or ointments around the eyes as there is a risk of causing glaucoma that can lead to blindness.
- 9) Steroid pills are sometimes prescribed for one to three weeks, in more severe cases.
- 10) Over the counter anti-histamine (anti-itch) pills can such as Claritin (loratadine), Zyrtec (cetirizine), Allegra (fexofenadine) and Benadryl (diphenhydramine) may help relieve the itch.

## Work-up to determine the cause

- 1) If you identify a product that you are allergic to, provide us with the ingredient list so that we can better identify the chemical that you are allergic to, so he can advise you to avoid purchasing other products that contain the same chemical.
- 2) A skin biopsy is sometimes performed to better determine what is happening in the skin at the microscopic level.
- 3) When the cause can not be determined, patch testing is sometimes performed. We typically apply 36 chemicals that commonly cause contact dermatitis. You wear the patches for 2 days and the sites are examined after 2 and 4 days. This requires three separate appointments (e.g., Monday, Wednesday and Friday). If our patch test results don't give us an answer we sometimes send you to a specialist who can test you with additional chemicals.
- 4) Read more about allergic contact dermatitis at our web site at:  
[http://www.rutlandskin.com/#patients\\_handouts](http://www.rutlandskin.com/#patients_handouts)

