

Trichiasis

WHAT IS TRICHIASIS?

Usually, eyelashes grow away from the eye. But sometimes they can grow toward the eye instead. When this happens, it's called trichiasis. This can be a problem because the eyelashes might touch the eye, causing irritation or even scarring.



Figure 1. Trichiasis on a child which shows eyelashes growing toward the eye. (Source: <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1213321-clinical?form=fpf>, last accessed 11/2/2023)

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TRICHIASIS?

Trichiasis can have different effects on the eye. It might not cause any symptoms. Or, it can lead to eye pain, feeling like something is in the eye, sensitivity to light, red eyes, tearing, and scratches on the clear front part of the eye (cornea). Scratches on the cornea can lead to eye infection and scarring. Sometimes, if the eyelashes touch the eye for a long time, a person might get used to it and not feel it anymore. This can be dangerous because it can harm the cornea permanently without the patient knowing.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF TRICHIASIS?

As people get older, their eyelashes might change and these changes may be temporary. Some habits like rubbing the eyes often, can cause the eyelashes to turn inwards. Inflammation of the eyelids and eyelashes, a condition called Blepharitis, can also cause eyelashes to grow in the wrong direction. Some children are born



with eyelid problems, like Epiblepharon where extra eyelid skin on the lower eyelid pushes the lashes upward. This is common in Asian or Hispanic children and often gets better as the child gets older. Some people can have extra eyelashes growing in an abnormal way, called distichiasis.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR TRICHIASIS?

For children, trichiasis is often temporary and doesn't need any treatments. Some doctors may prescribe artificial tear eye drops or ointment to protect the eyes. If there is a scratch on the eye, antibiotic drops may be needed. Taking out the misdirected eyelashes can be a short-term fix, but they tend to grow back short and stiff which can be more irritating. If there is an eye infection, scarring or vision loss; the ophthalmologist might use special tools to remove the eyelash roots with a surgery. If the cause of trichiasis is an eyelid problem, surgery can be done on the eyelid so that the eyelashes point in the correct direction.

MORE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND:

- <https://eyewiki.org/Trichiasis>

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