

3 WAYS to treat

Styes

We ask our three experts for alternative suggestions on how to treat styes

MEET THE EXPERTS

The acupuncturist:

SUZANNE CAFFERKY is an acupuncturist/herbalist practicing in Drogheda. www.suzannecafferky.com



The doctor:

MARK ROWE is a GP, author and motivational speaker. His medical practice is based at the Waterford Health Park, which he founded. Dr. Rowe's special interests include men's health and preventative health screening. He is the author of *The Men's Health Book - A Guide for the Irish Man* with all royalties going to a cancer charity. For more information, visit www.whp.ie



The dietitian:

SARAH KEOGH, MSC, BSC, MINDI, runs a private practice at the Albany Clinic in Lower Fitzwilliam Street in Dublin, as well as a food and nutrition consultancy (www.eatwell.ie).



TEA BAG CAUTION

If the tea bag is too hot when applied to your eye, it may make things worse. Make sure that the tea bag has had time to cool down, so that it doesn't burn your eye.

The Dietitian: SARAH KEOGH

Itchy and sore eyes can be very uncomfortable and eye infections can keep coming back. It is important to see your GP, if you haven't already, to rule out anything serious. From a dietary point of view, there are a couple of things to try, although if you are very busy or stressed, diet will only help a little. Start with a multivitamin and mineral supplement. When you are stressed, you go through vitamins and minerals faster than normal and your usual diet may not be able to keep up. This can leave your immune system struggling to deal with minor infections. Also fish oils can be useful in helping to reduce irritation. Go for oil-rich fish like mackerel, salmon, herring or sardines. Vitamin A is also important for healthy eyes, look for red and orange coloured fruit and vegetables such as carrots and red peppers and oil-rich fish

The Doctor: MARK ROWE

Styes are caused by an infection of the oily glands of the eyelid – these glands have a role in being able to lubricate the eyeball, so when they get blocked, you get a low-grade infection. They're very common, more so if your immune system is run down, so if you do have one, it is very important not just to look at treating the sty itself but to look at your overall lifestyle. Look at if you're getting enough sleep or rest (because if not, styes are more common), look at your diet, whether you're getting exercise and dealing with stress productively – being able to de-stress is so important, whether it's meditating or going for a walk. Very occasionally, recurring styes can be an early sign of diabetes or it can be associated with other conditions where your immune system

I have a recurring sty problem and it is getting very annoying. I think it's gone and it will pop up again down the line, which causes my eyes to be watery, itchy and very sensitive to the light. I don't wear contact lenses, but I do wear a bit of eye make up on a daily basis, particularly eyeliner. I have been working on a new project in work, which has been quite taxing and stressful, with a lot of late nights. Could this have a bearing? Are there any changes I can make to my diet or is there anything I can take to help reduce my chances of it coming back as I'm afraid it will lead to infection.

are also a good source. Snack on mineral-rich foods like nuts and seeds and drink plenty of water to stop your eye from drying out – don't just go for tea and coffee. Finally, make sure you eat regularly and don't skip meals if you're busy. It is difficult for your body to get everything it needs, if you miss even one meal a day.

is weakened. And sometimes styes can occur in people who have very high blood cholesterol and blood fat levels. In terms of treatment, apply a warm face cloth as a compress or a warm recently used teabag four or six times a day, which will allow it to rupture more quickly and heal. Sometimes topical antibiotics and ointments and creams are used. Lid hygiene is very important so wash your hands every time you've touched a sty and to help prevent recurrence, clean the base of your eyelashes gently with a Q-tip and diluted baby shampoo. Never squeeze or press it as that can make the infection worse and never wear contacts or makeup when you have a sty. Make-up and brushes should be kept clean and never shared with anyone!

The Acupuncturist: SUZANNE CAFFERKY

My advice straight away is to change your eye make-up and don't use it while infected. Rubbing the eyes, especially when the sty is oozing pus, can spread the infection along the eyelid and cause other styes – this also includes using the same eye make up at the time of infection and after. Chinese medicine calls styes 'Needle Eyes' and they are an early warning sign that there is something toxic in the body. In TCM, styes would fall into the category of a wind heat, damp heat, toxic heat problem on a background of a spleen

stomach disharmony. By heat, we mean the inflammation that is seen as the redness and the damp is when it is swollen and the pus is the toxic aspect of it. Acupuncture is incredibly effective at helping the body's own immune system to fight the infection without side-effects. It also helps with the discomfort. During an active phase, try a recently used camomile teabag as a compress to calm the irritation with some euphrasia. The camomile is a natural anti-inflammatory and the euphrasia is specifically indicated for red eye conditions. I would be concerned about

the recurrence and would be looking at the possibility that the stress is impacting your immunity. I would advise a course of three to four acupuncture sessions or/and herbal medicine to boost your own body's defence system and its response to stress. To help yourself immediately, avoid greasy and spicy foods including alcohol as this causes internal heat and diminishes the spleen and stomach. Inadequate rest and overwork impacts the energetics of the spleen and stomach also. To find a recommended registered acupuncturist, see www.tcmci.com