Trichiasis

What is trichiasis?

Trichiasis is a common eyelid problem. Eyelashes grow inwards toward the eye. The lashes rub against the **cornea**, the **conjunctiva**, and the inner surface of the eyelids. This irritates the eye.

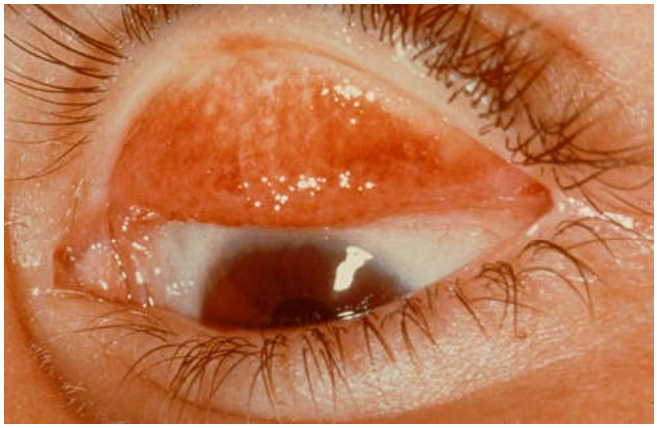
What causes trichiasis?

Sometimes people get trichiasis and there is no known cause. Anyone can develop trichiasis. It is more common in adults. Some causes of trichiasis include:

- eye infection
- inflammation (swelling) of the eyelid
- autoimmune conditions
- trauma

Certain conditions increase your risk of developing trichiasis:

- Epiblepharon. This is congenital disorder. Loose skin around the eye forms a fold. This causes the lashes to assume a vertical position. This is mostly found in children of Asian ancestry.
- Herpes zoster eye disease.
- Trauma to the eye, such as burns.
- Chronic blepharitis. This is a common and ongoing condition. The eyelids become swollen. Oily particles and bacteria coat the **lid margin** near the base of the eyelashes.
- Trachoma. This is a severe eye infection found in developing nations.



Trachoma—a bacterial infection of the eyes—can lead to trichiasis if left untreated

Eye Words to Know

Cornea: Clear, dome-shaped window of the front of your eye. It focuses light into your eye.

Conjunctiva: Clear tissue covering the white part of your eye and the inside of your eyelids.

Lid margin: The edge of the eyelid where the conjunctiva (covering the inside of the lid) and the skin meet. It is where the eyelashes meet the eyelids.

Eyelash follicle: A sac from which an eyelash grows.

- Rare disorders of the skin and mucous membranes. (Stevens-Johnson syndrome and cicatricial pemphigoid)

What are the symptoms of trichiasis?

Your eye may feel irritated by the sensation of having something in your eye.

Other symptoms include:

- redness,
- tearing, and
- sensitivity to bright light

Eyelashes that rub against the cornea for a long time can cause a corneal abrasion or even a corneal ulcer.

How is trichiasis treated?

Trichiasis treatment involves removing the eyelash, follicle or both, or redirecting eyelash growth.

Sometimes trichiasis affects only a few eyelashes. Your ophthalmologist may simply remove them with forceps (tweezers). There is a chance the eyelashes may grow back again in the wrong direction.

If you have many lashes growing toward your eye, surgery can remove them permanently. Ablasion surgery uses radiofrequencies or lasers to remove the lashes and hair follicles. Your ophthalmologist will numb your eye before the outpatient procedure.

Other surgical treatments include:

- **Electrolysis.** This process uses electricity to permanently remove hair. While effective, electrolysis is time-consuming and can be painful.
- **Cryosurgery.** This removes the lashes and follicles by freezing them. Cryosurgery is effective but has the potential for complications.

Your ophthalmologist may recommend surgery to reposition the eyelashes. This can be the case if your trichiasis is due to epiblepharon.

Summary

Trichiasis is a common eyelid problem. With trichiasis, eyelashes grow inwards toward the eye. The lashes rub against the cornea, the conjunctiva, and the inner surface of the eyelids. This irritates the eye.

Anyone can develop trichiasis, although it is more common in adults. Eye infection, swelling of the eyelid, autoimmune conditions and trauma all cause trichiasis.

If you have trichiasis, your eye may feel irritated by the sensation of having something in your eye.

Other symptoms include:

- redness
- tearing, and
- sensitivity to bright light

Trichiasis can cause a corneal abrasion or even a corneal ulcer.

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Trichiasis treatment involves removing the eyelash, follicle or both, or redirecting eyelash growth.

If you have any questions about your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Get more information about trichiasis from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology— at **aao.org/trichiasis-link**.

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