

Lid Hygiene Is Critical for Our Ocular Health

Every six months or so, we make an appointment with our dentist to have a deep cleaning of our teeth. We know the importance of dental hygiene because we brush our teeth daily. Even with daily brushing, a tough film of bacteria develops on our teeth, requiring routine cleaning to maintain our oral health. Our ocular health is no less critical, but many of us do not perform daily lid hygiene, and even fewer schedule a visit with our eye care specialists to deep clean our eyelids thoroughly every 6 months. Washing our face is insufficient to remove the daily buildup on our eyelid margin. Our lashes hide the lid margin, and the orbital bones glide our hands and fingers away from our eyelids while washing our face.

The gradual accumulation of oil, bacteria, Demodex mites, and debris generates inflammation along our eyelid margins that not only damages the eyelid itself but also seeps onto the ocular surface with every blink to cause collateral damage on the conjunctiva and cornea. Chronic inflammation causes blurriness, grittiness, dryness, and redness – hallmarks of dry eye syndrome. Beyond the symptoms are anatomic changes to our eyes. Our eyelid margin becomes vascularized and irregular, which can cause mechanical damage to the cornea and inflammatory changes on the cornea that can be seen as punctate epitheliopathy, Staph marginal disease, and even ulcers. The lacrimal punctum constricts, leading to decreased tear drainage and increased accumulation of inflammation on the ocular surface. Each successive injury to our eyelids potentiates the next cycle of injury.

Luckily, there are excellent eyelid hygiene products available for daily cleansing. The three main types of ingredients found in lid hygiene products are tea tree oil, hypochlorous acid, and okra. Tea tree oil controls the mite population. Hypochlorous acid acts as a broad-spectrum antimicrobial agent that can attack the top surface of the microbiome on our eyelids. But the bacteria or mites beneath the top biofilm surface require a mechanical process that a wipe or foam cleanser can deliver.

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Hypochlorous acid does not control Demodex mites. Okra-based products use polysaccharide complex derived from fresh okra to control inflammation, reduce biofilm, and kill the Demodex mites. Okra also is gentler than tea tree oil, which is essential when there's already significant injury to our ocular surface or eyelids from chronic inflammation.

Like our teeth, even daily eyelid hygiene cannot remove the tough biofilm plaque that develops over time. Luckily, several types of in-practice eyelid debridement or deep cleansing procedures are available. All it takes is calling our eye care specialist for an appointment. The simplest debridement uses a metal spatula to scrape away the biofilm, similar to how dentists use a metal descaler to remove dental plaque. Another office-based procedure uses an electromechanical device with a spinning tip resembling a Dremel drill. The spinning tip applies rapid rotational energy across our eyelids to strip the biofilm away from our eyelids. Due to the amount of mechanical force delivered from the spinning tip, the eyelid margin can take several days to recover, just like we often feel sore after a teeth whitening procedure. Some eye professional offices can offer a new type of eyelid debridement procedure called ZEST. This procedure uses a patented gel derived from fresh okra and specially-made soft applicators to cleanse the eyelids without pain or trauma. The ZEST treatment differs from other in-office deep lid cleaning procedures because it dramatically and instantly improves dry eye symptoms from almost any cause, from Demodex to meibomian gland disease (MGD).

ZEST kits for your in-practice dry eye clinics are exclusively distributed in the UK by The Body Doctor Ltd. To discuss this patented, all-natural dry eye solution in detail as well as their range of Tea Tree products for Demodex, please contact The Body Doctor sales team on +44 (0) 1484 868816 or email sales@the-body-doctor.com.

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