

Information for Patients

Surgery to remove chalazia or meibomian cysts should only be carried out when specific criteria are met. This is because the medical evidence tells us that the intervention can sometimes do more harm than good, most get better by themselves and there are alternative treatments which can be just as effective.

About the condition

A chalazion is a harmless bump or nodule inside the upper or lower eyelid which is caused by a blocked or swollen oil gland. They normally disappear after a few weeks or months, so surgical removal should only be considered if the condition has persisted for six months, if your vision is impaired or if your doctor has concerns about infection or malignancy.

It's important you and your doctor make a shared decision about what's best for you if you have a chalazion. When making that decision you should both consider the benefits, the risks, the alternatives and what will happen if you do nothing.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

Surgery to drain the cyst may help, but it will only be considered if you have had the chalazion for at least six months or it is having a serious impact on your vision and after less invasive measures have been tried first.

What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

Incision of chalazia can be uncomfortable. The procedure itself is likely to cause swelling and sometimes bruising of your eyelids and the cyst itself could still take some weeks to disappear. Other risks include infection, bleeding, scarring and in rare cases, loss of vision. Chalazia can also return after they have been removed.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

Most chalazia will disappear without the need for medical intervention. Applying a warm compress for a few minutes a few times a day can help, as can gentle massage. If you do this a few times a day, the gland will often become unblocked and further treatment won't be necessary.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Doing nothing is not likely to be harmful. Chalazia can vary in size over a few weeks or months but usually discharge spontaneously without any medical intervention.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.