

What are Demodex Mites?

Demodex mites are tiny parasitic mites that live in or near hair follicles, including those of the eyelashes. They are commonly found in adults and are generally harmless. However, in some cases, they can cause or exacerbate eye conditions like blepharitis. It is incredibly common amongst adult population increasing as we get older.

Symptoms

- Itchy or burning eyes
- Crusty eyelashes
- Red or swollen eyelids
- Frequent blinking
- Feeling like something is in the eye

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is usually made by an eye care professional, who will examine your eyelashes and may take a small sample to look for mites under a microscope.

Treatment

Treatment focuses on reducing the number of mites and managing symptoms:

1. Eyelid Hygiene:

Clean eyelids daily with a gentle, non-irritating cleanser. Warm compresses can help loosen crusts and debris.

Tea Tree Oil-based Products:

Tea tree oil has known anti-Demodex properties, and there are eyelid cleansers and ointments that contain tea tree oil as an active ingredient. These products can help reduce the population of Demodex mites on the eyelids and alleviate symptoms. Examples include eyelid scrubs or foams with tea tree oil g. Optase wipes, or Oust Demodex cleanser or foaming cleanser

Medicated Ointments or Creams:



Steroid and Antibiotic Combinations: In some cases, healthcare professionals may prescribe ointments or creams that combine a mild steroid with an antibiotic. The steroid helps reduce inflammation and swelling, while the antibiotic helps control any bacterial infections that may arise due to the presence of Demodex mites. Examples include ointments containing antibiotics like erythromycin or bacitracin.

Sulfur-based Ointments: Sulfur-based ointments or creams can be effective in managing Demodex blepharitis. Sulfur has been found to be toxic to Demodex mites and can help reduce their population. Eg Sulfacetamide ophthalmic ointment available in USA but not UK. However, these products may have a strong odor and can be irritating to the skin, so they should be used under the guidance of a healthcare professional.

Xdemvy - (lotilaner ophthalmic solution) 0.25% The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Tarsus Pharmaceuticals' Xdemvy for the treatment of Demodex blepharitis, marking the first-ever FDA approval of a drug for the condition that affects the eyelids. One drop twice per day for 6 weeks found 50% of patients had a reduction of crusties (collarettes) and 60% of patients had their Demodex mites completely wiped out. Redness was also gone from the lids. We await for it to be approved in Europe.

Summary trial data

XDEMZY was evaluated in 2 pivotal trials with 833 patients (415 received XDEMZY).6-8 Trial 1: When taken twice daily in each eye for 6 weeks, compared to those who did not receive XDEMZY, XDEMZY reduced collarettes to 2 or less for the upper eyelid in 44% of patients (N=209) at Day 43; XDEMZY eradicated mites (mite density of 0 mites/lash) in 68% of patients (N=212) at Day 43. Trial 2: When taken twice daily in each eye for 6 weeks, compared to those who did not receive XDEMZY, XDEMZY reduced collarettes to 2 or less for the upper eyelid in 55% of patients (N=193) at Day 43; XDEMZY eradicated mites (mite density of 0 mites/lash) in 50% of patients (N=203) at Day 43.

Avoid Eye Makeup:

When symptoms are severe, avoiding eye makeup can reduce irritation.



- Managing underlying conditions like rosacea or dandruff that can be associated with Demodex infestation.

When to See a Doctor

If you experience persistent symptoms, or if over-the-counter remedies do not bring relief, consult an eye care professional.

Nicholas Lee 2023