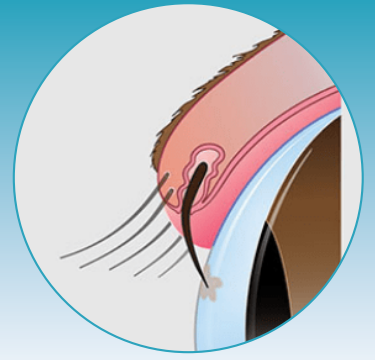


Distichiasis



What is distichiasis ?

Distichiasis is a condition where extra eyelashes (distichia) grow from the edge of the eyelid margin. While some patients with distichiasis experience no discomfort at all, others develop irritation, pain, and damage to the eye depending on the number, length, and stiffness of the hairs.

What signs might I notice?

Patients with troublesome distichia may show one or more of the following signs:

- Excessive tearing or watery eyes
- Squinting or blinking more than normal
- Redness of the eye
- Sensitivity to light
- Rubbing at the eyes or face
- Recurrent eye infections or conjunctivitis

Which breeds are affected?

Distichia can occur in any breed, but it is more commonly seen in Cocker Spaniels, Cavaliers, Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, Boxers, Shetland Sheepdogs and Bulldogs.

In dogs the condition is often inherited and may be present in both eyes.

The condition is much rarer in cats than in dogs but can be seen occasionally.

How is distichia diagnosed?

Your veterinarian will perform a detailed eye examination. The extra eyelashes can usually be seen using magnification and a bright light.

If eye irritation is present, special stains may be used to check for scratches or ulcers on the cornea. Identifying and treating any corneal damage is an important part of managing the condition.

Does every dog with distichia need treatment?

No, many dogs have a small number of soft extra eyelashes that do not cause discomfort or damage. In these cases, treatment may not be necessary, and regular monitoring is all that is required.

Treatment is usually recommended when the hairs are causing eye pain or irritation, excessive tearing, corneal ulcers, recurrent conjunctivitis and/or ongoing damage to the surface of the eye

How are distichia treated?

The best treatment depends on the severity of the condition.

- **Lubricating eye drops**

Some mildly affected dogs can be managed with lubricating eye drops or ointments to reduce irritation.

- **Manual removal**

The eyelashes can sometimes be removed, but they often grow back within a few weeks.

- **Permanent treatment**

For dogs experiencing ongoing problems, procedures aimed at permanently destroying the abnormal hair follicles may be recommended. These can include techniques such as:

- Cryotherapy (freezing the follicles)
- Electrolysis
- Other specialist surgical eyelid procedures

These treatments are usually performed under general anaesthesia.

Your veterinarian will discuss the most appropriate option for your dog's individual needs.

What happens after treatment?

Most patients recover quickly following treatment.

Your pet may require:

- An Elizabethan collar (buster collar)
- Eye drops or ointments, and oral medications for a few weeks post-operatively
- Follow-up examinations to monitor healing

Some mild swelling of the eyelids may occur for a few days after treatment and is usually temporary.

What is the long-term outlook?

The prognosis for most patients with distichia is excellent.

With appropriate treatment and monitoring, most pets remain comfortable and maintain good vision. Some patients may require repeat treatment if additional abnormal eyelashes develop in the future.