

# Eyelid Spasms

## Are there different types of eye lid spasms?

Yes. The three most common types of eyelid spasms are eyelid twitch (or tic), essential blepharospasm, and hemifacial spasm.

## What causes minor eyelid spasms?

The cause of minor eyelid twitching is unknown. A slight spasm of the lower eyelid or even both eyelids is common and of no concern. Minor eyelid twitches require no treatment as they usually resolve spontaneously. The spasms are usually related to stress and/or fatigue.

## What is essential blepharospasm?

**Essential blepharospasm** is an involuntary condition usually involving both eyes, where the eyelids and, sometimes, the eyebrows close involuntarily. In advanced cases, muscles of the mouth or neck are sometimes involved in these spasms. When these spasms occur, temporary inability to see may result because of the involuntary eyelid closure. The spasms are rare but very troublesome, and sometimes incapacitating.

## What causes blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm is caused by abnormal nerve impulses, which produce muscle spasm. It almost never a psychiatric disease.

## How can blepharospasm be treated?

Blepharospasm can be treated with medications, biofeedback, injection of botulinum (botulism toxin) and surgery.

Medications and biofeedback are rarely successful in managing blepharospasm, but may be advised in mild cases or cases not responding to other treatment.

Botulinum injections are now the most commonly recommended treatment for blepharospasm. Injection of botulinum in very small quantities into the muscles around the eyes relaxes the spasm. The injection works for several months, but will slowly wear off and usually needs to be repeated.

The treatment is very successful and has few side effects. Drooping of the eyelids, double vision or dryness of the eye are possible side effects, but occur rarely and will subside as the injection wears off.

Surgery may also be recommended your ophthalmologist. The surgeon moves either the nerve causing the spasm or the spastic muscles themselves. The surgical results are generally permanent and any side effects are also usually permanent.

## What is hemifacial spasm?

Hemifacial spasm is a twitching on one side of the face of the eyelid muscles and usually the muscles around the mouth. The spasm can be caused by an artery pressing on the nerve to the facial muscles near the brainstem. Botulinum injections may be beneficial.

A neurosurgical procedure for hemifacial spasm may relieve the pressure of the artery on the nerve. While it is generally successful, it is a major neurosurgical operation and serious complications are

## **Why are regular medical eye examinations important for everyone?**

Eye disease can occur at any age. Many eye diseases do not cause symptoms until the disease has done damage. Since most blindness is preventable if diagnosed and treated early, regular medical examinations by an ophthalmologist are very important.

Compliments of Your Ophthalmologist

**Daniel B Pope, M.D. PA**

**426 Manatee Ave W  
Bradenton, FL 34205**



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY  
THE EYE M.D. Association  
P.O. Box 7424, San Francisco, CA 94120-7424  
<http://www.eyenet.org>

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