

White Papule on the Eyelid

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A 47-year-old female presents with a white papule on her eyelid that she is unable to exfoliate.

What is your diagnosis?

Milia are benign, asymptomatic, tiny epidermoid cysts filled with keratin. They are 1 mm to 2 mm dome-shaped, pearly white, superficial papules. Primary milia can be seen in infants and adults, while secondary milia (damage to pilosebaceous unit) can occur in blistering conditions (e.g., porphyria cutanea tarda, epidermolysis bullosa, bullous pemphigoid, burns) and following microdermabrasion. They are common around the eye. In infants, primary milia arise in sebaceous glands that are not fully developed; they are common on the nose, mucosae (Epstein's pearls) and palate (Bohn's nodules).

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Figure 1. White papule on the eyelid.

Milia of infancy tend to spontaneously disappear within the first few weeks of life, while those in older children, adults and secondary milia tend to persist. Topical therapies are seldom of benefit. These benign lesions can be incised and then manually expressed without local anesthetic.

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