

Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

Eye Twitching: What It Means and How to Stop It

Most of us have experienced eyelid twitching at some point in our lives. Sometimes, it's a quiver that goes away as quickly as it came. Other times, the spasms stick around – tugging your eyelid more forcefully and frequently. Could this be something warranting a trip to the doctor?

Fortunately, eyelid twitching is rarely a sign of something serious and usually resolves on its own without treatment. But some cases warrant a trip to a doctor to prevent the twitches from taking over your life. Here, you'll learn more about this common yet bothersome problem to help you understand whether your twitches are typical.

Two Types of Eyelid Twitching

Eyelid twitching falls into two general categories: eyelid myokymia and benign essential blepharospasm.

Eyelid myokymia is the more common form, and it typically goes away on its own.

Benign essential blepharospasm is a rarer condition, and it can produce twitching that eventually completely closes the eyelids. This condition requires treatment to correct.

Doctors aren't exactly sure what causes eye twitching, although increased stress, lack of sleep, alcohol and caffeine intake, eye strain (from looking at a computer all day, for example) and certain medications are linked to it.

For most cases of eyelid twitching, making lifestyle adjustments like reducing stress (through exercise or meditation, for instance), limiting caffeine and alcohol, and getting more sleep help the twitching subside. If you're taking medication, ask your doctor if your eye twitching may be a side effect and what options you have to reduce its impact on your life.

When to See Your Doctor About Eye Twitching

Most cases of eye twitching are mildly annoying, but when the twitches don't go away, they can interfere with your life and may need treatment to resolve. If your eye twitching has been ongoing for a few weeks, schedule an appointment with your eye doctor to rule out any other problems.

Other symptoms warranting a doctor visit include:

- Your eye twitch is causing your eyelid to droop, completely close or if you struggle to open your eye after a twitch
- Your vision is impacted by the twitching
- You experience other eye symptoms with the eyelid twitching, like eye swelling or discharge

If your eye twitching requires treatment, your doctor may recommend medications or botulinum toxic (Botox) injections to relax the muscles that are twitching. Eye twitching rarely requires surgery to correct, but options are available if non-surgical treatments don't successfully stop the spasms.

Do you need an eye doctor? Searching for an in-network vision provider is easy with DeltaVision. Find your eye doctor online and schedule your preventive vision health exam today.

SOURCES

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/eye-twitching>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/eye-twitching/basics/causes/sym-20050838>

Ways to Support an Older Loved One's Oral Health

Adults age 65 and older face several oral health problems, including:

- Tooth decay: 20% have an untreated cavity.
- Tooth loss: Nearly 20% have lost all of their teeth.
- Gum disease: 68% have some form of gum disease.
- Oral cancer: The median age of diagnosis is 62 years old.¹

If you're caring for an older loved one, it's important that you keep an eye on their oral hygiene as part of their overall health. Below are some tips to help you support a senior's dental wellness.

Be an Oral Health Ally for Your Aging Loved Ones

When it comes to helping aging loved ones with their oral health, it's important to go back to basics. Ensure they are eating a healthy diet that's rich in nutrients and light on sweets and drinking plenty of water. Brushing and flossing twice a day will help keep their mouths healthy between preventive visits with their dentists.

Speaking of, keeping twice-yearly dental appointments on the calendar is an essential piece to maintaining oral health at any age. Not only do these appointments provide a deep clean of the teeth and mouth, but they're also an important opportunity for the dentist to check for signs of oral cancer, which is mostly diagnosed in older adults.¹

Between dental visits, you can also help protect your older loved ones by being aware of the signs of oral cancer, which include changes to the lips and tongue, red or white patches in the mouth, and sores and swelling in the mouth, throat and neck areas. If you notice any of these signs, it's important to call a dentist right away.

Caring for Dentures

If you are caring for a senior who wears dentures, make sure you understand how they should be properly worn and cleaned, which typically includes being rinsed after each meal, brushed at least once daily and soaked overnight.²

Assisted Living Tips

People living in a nursing home or other assisted living facility have a higher risk of developing dental problems.¹ One way you can support a senior's oral health when they live in an assisted living home is by asking the following questions to a facility director or health manager to assess their focus on residents' oral health:

What's included as part of the daily dental hygiene routine for residents?

- If my loved one struggles maintaining their own dental health, do you have someone who will help?
- Do you coordinate professional preventive dental exams? If so, how many a year?
- Do you have a dentist or dental hygienist who works onsite?
- How will your staff ensure that dentures are properly cleaned?

An Investment in Dental Insurance Is an Investment in Your Overall Health

One of the reasons aging adults are more likely to develop oral health problems is because they stop seeing the dentist. Upon retirement, many older adults lose their employer-sponsored benefits, including dental insurance, and Medicare does not include preventive dental care.¹

Seeing a dentist twice yearly will ensure that any problems are found early, which often means that treatments are less invasive and costly. Older adults with dental coverage are more likely to maintain their dental checkups, so it's important to encourage your aging loved ones to protect their financial, oral and overall health by considering individual dental coverage.

If you are interested in purchasing individual dental coverage for your aging one, visit Delta Dental of Iowa to get started.

Aging adults may need an advocate to assist them in maintaining their health in their later years. These tips will help you support the seniors in your life and keep them smiling for years to come.

REFERENCES

1. https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/adult-oral-health/adult_older.htm
2. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/denture-care/expert-answers/faq-20058375>