Demodex – The mites that live in our eyelashes!
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*Demodex folliculorum* and *Demodex brevis* (collectively referred to as Demodex) are the most common permanent ectoparasites in humans, occurring in 10 percent of skin biopsies and 12 percent of follicles.\(^1\,^2\) Penetration of Demodex into the dermis and/or an increase in the number of mites is thought to cause infestation, which triggers inflammation.\(^3\,^4\)

Symptoms of Demodex infestation include itching, burning, foreign body sensation, and crusting and redness of the lid margin. Patients with Demodex infestation can also have disorders of the eyelashes, lid margin inflammation, meibomian gland dysfunction, and blepharoconjunctivitis.\(^5\)

Treating Demodex can be a challenge. Over-the-counter lid scrubs are not effective in killing the mites.\(^5\) The latest treatment of tea tree oil has been shown to be effective in controlling Demodex.\(^5\) Cliradex\(^\circledR\) contains individually wrapped towelettes soaked with a special formulation of tea tree oil. The patient unwraps the towelette, then rubs it over closed eyelids and may also rub it over their entire face. They experience a cooling sensation and let the product evaporate over a period of 1-2 minutes. Unlike other lid hygiene products, they do not rinse their eyes or face after applying the treatment. A word of advice – consider showing your patient in office how to properly use Cliradex\(^\circledR\); if they open their eyes too quickly, the product will sting their eyes and be very uncomfortable.

Treating Demodex does not stop with eyelash treatment. Patients need to wash their entire body, including their hair with soap or shampoo to get Demodex under control. If the patient does not have proper hygiene, the mites will likely migrate back to the eyelid and the process will have to be repeated.\(^5\) Also, encourage patients to wash their bath towels and bed sheets with hot water and dry on a high heat setting to kill the mites.

Future treatments of Demodex include radiofrequency and heat as an alternative to tea tree oil.\(^5\)

References:

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