

## **Eyelid Spasms**

There are different types of eyelid spasms. The three most common are...

- ◆ Twitch or Tic – Minor twitching of the eyelids or areas around the eyes
- ◆ Essential Blepharospasm – An involuntary condition usually involving spasms of both eyes
- ◆ Hemifacial Spasm – Occurs on only one side of the face and usually involves the eyelid muscles and the muscles of the face and mouth

### **Symptoms**

The symptoms of minor twitching are just that...minor twitches of the eyelids or area just below the eyelids. Most people refer to this as a tic. While it may be annoying, these spasms are usually short lived.

In blepharospasm, the eyelids and sometimes even the eyebrows twitch and close. In severe cases, the muscles of the neck and face are also involved, and vision is impaired because of the closing of the eyelids, which can sometimes last for long periods of time.

In hemifacial spasm, there is twitching on only one side of the face, involving the eyelid muscles and usually the muscles around the mouth.

### **Causes**

Doctors don't know what causes minor eyelid twitches, although the spasms are usually related to stress or fatigue.

Blepharospasm is believed to be caused by abnormal nerve impulses.

Hemifacial spasm is caused by an artery pressing on the nerves to the facial muscles near the brainstem.

### **Treatment**

Minor twitching or tics usually require no treatment because the condition is short-lived and goes away on its own.



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The most successful current treatment for blepharospasm is injection of botulinum (Botox) into the muscles around the eyes. Used only in very small amounts, Botox usually works for several months, but the effect does wear off and may have to be repeated. The side effects of a Botox injection can include drooping of the eyelids, double vision or eye dryness. Fortunately, these side effects subside.

For hemifacial spasm, Botox injections may help the spasms, but sometimes a neurosurgical procedure may be necessary to relieve the pressure of the artery on the nerve. While this procedure is usually successful, there are risks to any neurological surgery, so it is considered only after other therapies do not work.