Blepharitis

Blepharitis is a chronic inflammation of the eye lids, which can cause irritation, itching, crusting of the eyelashes, and occasionally a red eye.

How do I know if I have blepharitis?
The most common form of blepharitis is brought about by an immune response to an overgrowth of normal skin bacteria. With this condition, the patient will notice a redness of the eyelid margin and crusting scales or flaking around the eyelashes.

Seborrheic blepharitis is slightly less common. It occurs in older patients who have had a longer history of ocular complaints. It is also often associated with dandruff of the scalp. With this type, the patient will notice slight redness of the eyelid with abundant crusting or flaking around the eyelashes. There will be a greasy consistency to the crusting discharge and most patients have a seborrheic dermatitis (itching/inflammation of the skin) as well. If either of these types of blepharitis are left untreated, the condition will advance and lead to more severe complications. Erosion or ulceration of the eyelid or cornea may occur. This condition can cause a great deal of discomfort and requires prompt and aggressive treatment. Various antibiotics and steroid preparations may be necessary to eliminate the condition.

How is blepharitis treated?
Careful attention to lid hygiene is vital. The following regimen is helpful:

- Apply a warm compress to your closed eyelid for about 5 minutes, rinsing often to prevent cooling, 2 to 3 times per day. This will loosen crusty scales on your eye lids.
- Lid Scrubs can be purchased and used to scrub the eyelid margin in the morning and before bedtime. A home remedy version can be done by soaking a cotton swab in a solution of ½ water and ½ baby shampoo. Use this to do a scrub of the eyelid margin.
- There are times when a prescribed ointment is required for relief of the condition. When using, apply a thin layer to the eyelid margin at bedtime.
- In the case of seborrheic blepharitis, treatments used for oily scalps and anti-dandruff shampoos may also be helpful.

Can blepharitis return? Is it a chronic condition?
Yes, blepharitis is a chronic condition. It affects people of all ages. Once you get past the initial phase and have the blepharitis under control, using the suggested method of lid hygiene and some limited use of an antibiotic ointment is the best way to keep control of the condition.