

Research Says, Eyelashes Protects Eyes From Drying Out

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. artificial /ˌɑːr.tɪˈfɪ.əl/ (adjective) made by people, often as a copy of something natural
Example: They have decorated the venue with artificial flowers.
2. batting (someone's) eyelids/ eyes/ eyelashes - to move the eyes, eyelids or eyelashes very quickly
Example: She kept on batting her eyelids since something got caught in her eyes.
Note: bat an eyelid is also an idiom which means "to display a subtle emotional reaction, such as consternation, annoyance, sadness, joy, etc."
3. hypothesis /haɪˈpɔːθə.sɪs/ an idea or explanation for something that is based on known facts but has not yet been proved
Example: Several hypotheses for global warming have been suggested.
4. blink /blɪŋk/ to close and open the eyes quickly, once or several times
Example: He stared at us without blinking.
5. reflex /ˈriː.fleks/ a physical reaction to something that you cannot control
Example: I'm sorry I punched him, it was a reflex action/response.



Scientists have come up with answers to the ancient question of why eyelashes are the length they are. Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology conducted a variety of tests on the lashes of 22 different mammals. To test lashes' ability as a windbreak, the researchers created an **artificial** eye and placed it in a wind tunnel.

Head researcher David Hu's scientific opinion is that the function of eyelashes is to help protect the eyes from completely becoming dry and that the ideal eyelash length for this to happen is one-third as long as the eye is wide. Professor Hu found that across a wide variety of mammals, the proportion of eyelash length and eye width was consistently one-third.

Dr Hu started his investigation after the birth of his newborn daughter. He wondered why his baby kept on batting her eyelids. He told the International Business Times that: "Eyelashes that rim the eyes in mammals have been a mystery for a long time as to what their function was. There were a lot of **hypotheses**, from dust catchers to triggering the **blink reflex**...." Blink **reflex** is the involuntary blinking of the eyelids.

"What we did was the first aerodynamic (*means: the way that air moves around things*) study of eyelashes. We showed using three independent means that eyelashes reduce drying out of the eye by 70 per cent, and they reduce [the deposits] of small airborne particles." A colleague said Hu had a talent for, "looking at what everybody has looked at, and seeing what nobody has seen."

DISCUSSION

1. Why do people think longer eyelashes are more attractive?
2. What do you do when you get an eyelash in your eye?
3. What do you think of eyelashes on animals?
4. People say camel's eyelashes are very beautiful. What do you think?
5. Which are more important, eyelashes or eyebrows?