



DRY EYE

What is dry eye?

Tears that lubricate are constantly produced by a healthy eye. Some people do not produce enough tears to keep the eye comfortable. Most people find it strange to learn that excessive tearing can also be a symptom of dry eyes! If the tears responsible for

normal lubrication do not keep the eye wet enough, it becomes irritated. Excessive tear production also occurs when the eye is irritated by a foreign body or when a person cries.

What causes dry eyes?

- Tear production decreases with age. Although dry eye can affect both men and women at any age, post-menopausal women are more frequently affected.
- Dry eyes can also be associated with arthritis and may be accompanied by a dry mouth;
- A wide variety of common medications can cause dry eyes such as diuretics (water pills), beta-blockers, antihistamines, sleeping tablets, antidepressants and pain pills.

this is called Sjogren's syndrome.

How is it diagnosed?



An ophthalmologist will be able to confirm the diagnosis by examining the eyes. Sometimes it is necessary to do some confirmatory tests.

Symptoms of dry eyes include:

- Stinging or burning of the eye
- Scratchiness
- Stringy mucous in or around the eyes
- Eye irritation from smoke or wind
- Excessive tearing
- Difficulty wearing contact lenses

How is it treated?

1. Add tears

Eye drops, called artificial tears, can lubricate the eyes. Artificial tears are available without a prescription. Preservative-free drops are also available if you are sensitive to preservatives. If you need to use artificial tears more than every 2 hours, preservative-free brands may be better. You can use artificial tears as often as is necessary; from once a day to several times an hour.

2. Conserve tears

Tears drain out of the eye through a small canal into the nose (that is why your nose runs when you cry). Your ophthalmologist may close these canals either temporarily or permanently. The closure conserves your own tears and makes artificial tears last longer.

3. Reduce evaporation

Tears evaporate just like any other liquid. Steps can be taken to prevent evaporation. In winter, a humidifier or pan of water near a heater adds moisture to dry air. Wrap around glasses may reduce the drying effect of the wind. Overly warm rooms, air conditioning, hair dryers and wind all cause dryness and should be avoided.

4. Avoid irritants

Smoking is particularly irritating. Some people complain of scratchy eyes when they wake up. A small amount of ointment at bedtime can be used to ease this symptom. Certain vitamin supplements and Omega 3 may help some people.

Please note that these are general guidelines. If in doubt, consult your ophthalmologist.