

DRY EYES

Before discussing dry eyes, we need to know about the eyes tears. Tears are a mixture of three (3) components:



Oil, water, and mucin. Each component is created by a unique and separate gland. Under normal circumstances, each component is secreted and mixed together forming a "tear." Tears function to lubricate the eye, remove debris from the eyes surface, and provide a smooth optical surface for clearer vision. When one or more components fail to function properly, a condition known as dry eyes develops.

TYPICAL DRY EYE SYMPTOMS:

Ocular Redness	Burning
Watery Eyes (Reflex Tearing)	Stinging
Itching	Light Sensitivity
Intermittent Vision Fluctuations	Mucous Discharge
Contact Lens Intolerance	Contact Lens Solution Intolerance
Gritty Sandy Sensation	Light Sensitivity

Interestingly, some patients have no symptoms and the signs alone of dryness are recognized by your eye doctor.

So what are the typical causes of dryness?

1. Aging
2. Contact lenses
3. Medications
4. Environmental
5. Auto-Immune Disease(s)

1. AGING:

One of the joys of growing up besides gray hair and wrinkles, are the systematic decrease in both production and quality of ocular tears. This decrease is universal for both sexes. It is thought that hormones, pregnancy, and menopause play a major role for the higher incidence that is noted in women.



2. CONTACT LENSES:

Placing a foreign body into an eye continually requires "liquid" (tears) to maintain this gel-like lens in a soft, comfortable, and hydrated state. As one's tears absorb into the lens, the available quantity of tears markedly decrease. This decrease in tear availability results in increased eye irritation, increased protein deposition, higher risk for eye infections and overall general discomfort/dissatisfaction with their contact lenses. Many contact lens solutions contain various preservative agents may also aggravate a dry eye.



3. MEDICATIONS:

The effects of medications tend to decrease tear secretion. Typical offenders are: antihistamines, diuretics, oral contraceptives, anti-depressants, beta-blockers, sleeping pills, and pain relievers. In this category we



include items such as alcohol and smoking.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL:

Air pollution and or living in dry, windy, dusty, climates, or computer use and airborne pollen are likely culprits in precipitating or advancing dry eye symptoms. Chemicals in your work environment, the use of ceiling fans, A/C and heating systems also have deleterious effects. In addition, as mentioned under the medication section, smoking and alcohol consumption exacerbates the condition. Refractive surgical procedures such as LASIK and PRK are well known to create and or worsen a dry eye condition; albeit temporarily.

5. AUTO-IMMUNE DISEASE:

Diseases such as Sjögrens, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), etc., not only cause dry eyes but Sjögrens also cause dry mouth.



TREATMENT OPTIONS:

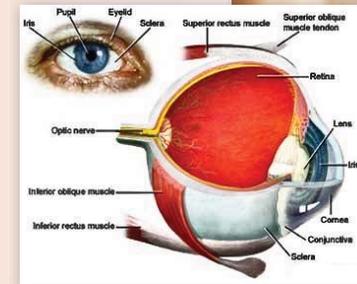
There are many medical options available to the patient directly from their eye doctor as well as substantial other-the-counter (OTC) products to treat, relieve, and heal inflamed irritated eyes.

Since the etiologies of dry eyes are so diverse, one solution does not fit all. Some of the current medical treatments available are prescription eye drops, Restasis™ and tear duct (punctum) plugs; an outstanding and safe option available for almost twenty years. These microscopic silicon plugs fit comfortably into the tear duct essentially blocking the eyes drain system providing more tear availability to lubricate the eye. They are painless to apply and the procedure takes only a moment in-office and the benefits are quickly appreciated and consistent.

OTC products are numerous. Some are not recommended at all such as Visine® and similar products. Ask your eye doctor which superior product(s) they recommend for your particular situation.



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