

DRY EYE

What is dry eye?

The tears your eyes normally produce are necessary for overall eye health and clear vision. Dry eye occurs when your eyes do not produce enough tears or produce tears that do not have the proper chemical composition, i.e. the balance between the grease, mucous and water that makes up the tears is wrong.

What causes dry eye?

Dry eye symptoms can result from the normal ageing process, exposure to certain environmental conditions, problems with normal blinking or from medications such as antihistamines, oral contraceptives or antidepressants. Dry eye can also be symptomatic of general health problems, other diseases or can result from chemical or thermal burns to the eye.

What are the symptoms of dry eye?

The most common symptoms include stinging, itchy, scratchy and uncomfortable eyes. Sometimes you may experience a slight blurring of your vision or a feeling of something foreign within the eye. You may experience increased dry eye symptoms on awakening. Some people experience an overly wet eye. This is a natural reflex to comfort a dry eye.

How is dry eye diagnosed?

During the eye examination, we will ask you questions about your general health, your use of medications and your home and work environments to determine any factors that may be causing dry eye symptoms. This information will help us decide whether to perform dry eye tests. These tests use diagnostic instruments, which allow a highly magnified view of your eyes and usually use special dyes. These tests will enable us to evaluate the quality, the amount and the distribution of tears to detect signs of dry eyes.

Can dry eye be cured?

Dry eye cannot be cured, but your eyes' sensitivity can be lessened and measures taken so your eyes remain healthy. The most frequent treatment is the use of artificial tears or tear substitutes. For more severe dry eye, ointment can be used, especially at bedtime. The problem is often contributed to by a dysfunction in some of the glands around the eyes, which produce the greasy element of the tears. Various therapies may be advised to try and help lessen this dysfunction. In some cases, small plugs may be inserted in the corner of the eyelids to slow drainage and loss of tears.

Will dry eye harm my eyes?

Most cases of dry eye are a mild problem only, which is not sight threatening. However, if severe dry eye is untreated, it can harm your eyes. Excessive dry eye can damage tissue and possibly scar the cornea of your eye, impairing vision. Severe dry eyes like this are rare. For most people the problem is one of uncomfortable eyes only. Dry eye can make contact lens wear more difficult due to increased irritation and a greater chance of eye infection. To keep dry eye symptoms in check, we will need to work together. Follow our instructions carefully. If you have increased dryness or redness that is not relieved by the prescribed treatment, let us know as soon as possible.