

What is Dry Eye?

The eye must receive enough lubrication to remain healthy and function properly. **Dry Eye** is a chronic condition that results from a decrease in lubricating tears. If left untreated, changes in the health and function of the eye will occur.

Diagnosis of Dry Eye

Eye care providers can diagnose dry eye through direct examination of the eye and by certain tests that evaluate the amount of lubricating tears available to protect the eye.

Wet May Actually Be Dry

“But, Doctor, my eyes tear. How can they be dry?”

Surprising as it sounds, excessive tearing is often a sign that your eyes are not getting enough lubrication.

The eye has an outer layer of skin that is cared for by our tears.

There are two types of tears: **lubricating** and **reflex**:

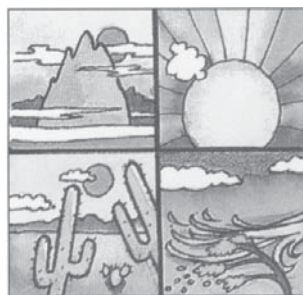
Lubricating tears are composed of mucous, fat and water. Their role is to provide moisture, nutrients, and protection for the eye.

Reflex tears are mostly water. Their role is to irrigate the eye after it has become irritated. If there is an insufficient amount of lubricating tears, the eye becomes irritated and dry. Once the brain senses an irritation, it sends a message to flood the eye with secondary reflex tears. This is why a “dry eye” tears all the time. These reflex tears will not treat a “dry eye” problem; only your doctor can do that.

What Causes Dry Eye?

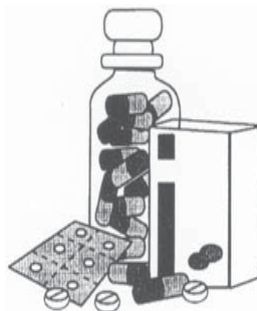
Dry Eye can result from several different factors, including:

Aging. Studies have proven that fewer lubricating tears are produced as we age.



Environment. Living in hot, dry or windy areas increases tear evaporation and may lead to dry eye. Even the breeze from a ceiling fan can cause problems.

Systemic disease. Many conditions, including arthritis, Sjogren’s Syndrome, and poor nutrition may lead to dry eye.



Medications. Over-the-counter medications as well as prescription drugs (e.g., glaucoma medications and antihistamines) cause “drying” of mucous membranes, including those of the eye.

Contact lens wear. All contact lenses depend on the eye’s tear film to function properly. Certain soft contact lenses actually absorb water from the eyes which, in turn, may cause dry eye.



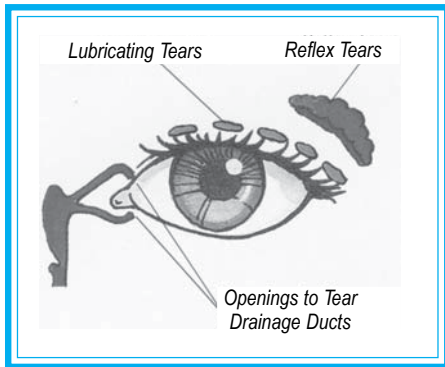
Treatment

Several different treatments are available for dry eye.

Initially, **artificial tears** are recommended.

Long-term relief from dry eye may be better achieved with **punctal plugs**. This painless, in-office procedure involves putting a small collagen plug in the tear drainage canal. These tiny plugs act to prevent the lubricating tears from draining away from the eye surface.

The first step is to use **temporary** punctal plugs. These plugs dissolve on their own in about three days. Their purpose is to determine the effectiveness of blocking your individual tear drainage canal.



If relief from dry eye was achieved with the temporary plugs or your symptoms are not worsened, then **permanent** closure of the drainage canal may be performed. This blockage of the tear drain can give long-term relief of dry eye and its associated symptoms.

Although a dry eye can be treated but never cured, punctal occlusion is a wonderful state-of-the-art treatment.

Other forms of dry eye treatment, such as **Restasis** or pulsed **steroid drops** may also help severe dry eyes.

Signs & Symptoms of Dry Eye

If you are experiencing any of these eye problems, please let your doctor know.

- Tearing or watery eyes
- Burning
- Itching or a scratchy feeling
- Redness
- Decreased or blurred vision
- Gritty or sandy feeling
- Mucous discharge
- Film over the eyes
- Foreign body sensation
- Contact lens wear intolerance



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DRY EYE



*What it is and
what to do
about it*



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WHERE YOUR VISION IS OUR VISION

1935 EAST HALLANDALE BEACH BLVD.

HALLANDALE BEACH, FLORIDA 333009

Tel.: 954-458-2112

Fax: 954-458-7186