

# THE DRY EYES

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## What is the dry eye?

The surface of our eyes is coated with a thin film of tears called the tear film. The tear film helps lubricate the eyes, prevents them from drying out and gives protection from bacteria and environmental irritants such as dust. We need to have a healthy tear film in order to keep our eyes comfortable and to maintain good vision.

Dry eye is a disorder of the normal tear film that results from either of the following:

1. Decreased tear production
2. Excessive tear evaporation



## 8 CAUSES OF DRY EYE



## Dry eye can be aggravated by a number of factors

- Reading and watching TV for prolonged periods
- Computer use
- Heating and air conditioning
- Exposure to dust and allergens
- Hot, dry or windy environments
- Contact lens use
- Laser eye surgery

## Risks of The Dry Eyes

While symptoms of dry eye can be irritating, for the vast majority of people no long-term vision loss is expected. Patients with severe dry eyes are more at risk of infection, ulceration and thinning of the surface of the eye. These conditions can cause permanent damage to the vision.

## WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?



Although there currently is no cure for dry eye, there are several treatments available to help make the eyes more comfortable, to maintain vision and to prevent damage to the tissues on the surface of the eye.

- **Artificial tear supplements**

The most common type of treatment for patients with dry eye is the use of eye drops known as 'artificial tears' or artificial tear supplements'. These eye drops do not treat the causes of dry eye; they only relieve the symptoms, but people with mild or moderate dry eye often find that using artificial tears alone is enough to keep their eyes comfortable.

- **Punctal occlusion**

Tears drain away from the eyes through small openings located near the inner corner of our eyelids. A procedure known as punctal occlusion can be performed by an eye specialist to help retain our natural tears and any artificial tears we put in our eyes for longer. Either temporary or permanent plugs can be placed just inside these openings in a simple, painless procedure that takes a few seconds.

Sometimes, in severe cases of dry eye, these openings can be permanently closed using cautery or laser. This procedure accomplishes the same thing as the punctal plugs, but cannot be reversed once it has been performed.

- **Treatment of underlying causes**

Your eye specialist will try to determine the cause of your dry eye symptoms eg blepharitis, or inflammation of the eyelids in order to give you the most appropriate advice and treatment.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOURSELF AT HOME?

### 8 STEPS TO MANAGE DRY EYE

**1. Check your medications.** Talk to your doctor to see if prescription drugs might be causing your dry eyes

**2. Nutrition.** Eat three healthy and sensible meals and snacks every day

**3. Avoid pollution and irritants.** Avoid rubbing your eyes which can disturb the tear film and transfer irritants to your eye

**4. Balance your hormones.** Try eating more whole grains, less sugar, and fewer processed foods. This will help to control insulin levels and keep inflammation under control

**5. Take Special care with contact lenses.** Contact lenses can soak up the fluid in your eye. Keep lenses clean, and try not to wear them all the time.

**6. Use artificial tears** to provide more moisture and lubrication for the surface of your eye

**7. Hydrate and humidify.** If you are dehydrated, the fluid in your eyes can be depleted, so drink lots of liquids

**8. Blink!** Try to blink every five seconds, especially when staring at your computer screen or digital device

