

Home Care for Dry Eye

Ophthalmology Department



Dry eye is a common condition that develops when the tear film is unable to properly lubricate the eye. Like dry skin, dry eyes need long term maintenance treatment to keep the tear film healthy.

There is no cure for dry eyes, so once you have dry eye, treat it daily to prevent worsening over time.

Eye dryness fluctuates over time. Even though on some days your symptoms may feel better, you are still dry and need to do the daily treatment. This regular treatment will prevent repeated flare up of symptoms. Treatment is simple, and if done regularly will help control most of your dry eye symptoms stay under control.

Treatment

Improving your tear film requires 2 strategies:

- Add external lubrication to your own tears.
- Stop your own tears from evaporating too fast.

External lubrication

Use tear substitutes, such as drops, gels or ointments. Tear drops are available over the counter and are not covered by medical insurance.

Drops in bottles may have preservatives or evaporating preservatives. The latter are safer for long term use. Drops also come in preservative free vials. These are even safer and more expensive since they are made for individual use. It is possible to store these carefully, avoid contamination, and get more than 1 drop out of a vial.



Gels come in bottles or tubes. They are thicker, longer lasting, and soothing. They may cause momentary blurring of your vision after use; however, this clears with blinking.



Ointments are thick and contain petroleum jelly and oils. They are used for intense lubrication of your eye often overnight while you are sleeping.

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Preventing tear evaporation

A thin layer of oil naturally covers your tears. This oil prevents tear evaporation and is secreted from glands along your eyelids called meibomian glands.



Use a warm compress mask every day to help these oils flow out of the glands better. For best results, use the mask every morning and every night.

If your eyelids are inflamed, your doctor may prescribe a specific regimen to clean your lids and eyelashes.

Things which worsen dry eye

Red eye drops and allergy drops do not treat dry eyes. They contain preservatives and chemicals that may worsen your condition.

Avoid applying makeup close to the eyelid margin because the makeup debris often spills over into your tear film irritating the eye. Always remove all makeup completely before you sleep.

Lifestyle modifications

A dry eye likes a humid environment. Drink enough water to hydrate internally. Use of a humidifier at bedtime can be especially helpful.

Screen time makes eyes drier.

Take frequent breaks.

Use the **20/20/20** rule:

try to look 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

Lower your screen monitor to avoid opening your eyes too wide.



Your doctor will advise you if a desktop humidifier also helps.



Avoid drafts like fans and vents blowing in your face.

Use wrap around glasses for extended outdoor activities.

