



Dry Eye

WHAT IS DRY EYE?

A healthy eye has a thin layer of tears that keeps it moist and your vision clear.

Dry eye occurs when your eyes don't make enough tears, or when the quality of your tears is poor. It can be caused by aging, hormonal changes, blinking issues, certain medications, health conditions (e.g. arthritis) or exposure to UV light and environmental irritants (e.g. like dry, windy environments).

Symptoms

- + Stinging, gritty, or scratchy eyes.
- + Blurred or fluctuating vision.
- + Burning or the feeling of something in your eye.
- + Light sensitivity.
- + Periods of excess tearing.



Risks

- + If dry eye is left untreated, it can be harmful.
- + It may damage or scar the sensitive corneal tissues impairing vision.
- + It can make wearing contact lenses uncomfortable or difficult.

Treatment

Dry eye is a chronic but manageable condition. During an eye exam, your optometrist will assess your overall health, medications, and environment to find the cause and recommend the right treatment.

- + Artificial tears, ointments, and at-home therapies.
- + Medicated eye drops.
- + In-office treatments like Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), Radiofrequency (RF), lid cleansing treatments, or heat/pressure therapies help clear blocked glands, remove debris and bacteria, and reduce inflammation.
- + Small punctal plugs in the corner of the eyelids to help retain moisture in the case of low tear production.
- + Diet changes, including more omega-3s.
- + Managing digital eye strain to reduce dry eye symptoms.
- + New prescription medications that help your body produce more of its own tears.

Your optometrist may also refer you to a primary healthcare provider if an underlying condition is contributing to dry eye.

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) provides partial coverage for appointments to assess chronic dry eye.¹



**For information about many other common
eye-related conditions, visit our website.
optometrists.ab.ca**

¹Optometrists can charge for insured services that the optometrist deems exceeds the AHCIP benefit and Albertans are responsible for additional costs incurred at the time of treatment. Practitioners are required to discuss fees with their patients before providing the service.