



Dry Eye

A COMMON PROBLEM

Everyone has a thin layer of tears that coats the front surface of our eyes. These tears keep our eyes healthy and comfortable, and are needed for both overall eye health and clear vision. Dry eye occurs when your eyes don't produce enough tears or produce tears that don't have the proper chemical composition.

Dry eye symptoms can result from the normal aging process, hormonal changes, exposure to certain environmental conditions, problems with normal blinking, or from medications such as antihistamines, oral contraceptives or antidepressants. Dry eye can also be a symptom of general health problems, such as arthritis, or can result from UV exposure and environmental irritants.

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Alberta
Association
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SYMPTOMS

The common symptoms of dry eye include:

- stinging, gritty, scratchy and uncomfortable eyes;
- fluctuating vision; and
- a burning feeling or a feeling of a foreign body within the eye.

In moderate to severe cases, you may experience blurred vision, light sensitivity or even periods of excess tearing.

RISKS

If dry eye is left untreated, it can be harmful. Excessive dry eye can damage and possibly scar the sensitive corneal tissues of your eye, impairing vision. Dry eye can make contact lens wear more difficult.

TREATMENT

During an eye exam, your Doctor of Optometry focuses on your general health, use of medications, and your home and work environments to determine what may be causing dry eye symptoms. They will also use specialized equipment to evaluate the issue.

Dry eye is a chronic, but treatable disease. Although there is no cure, your Doctor of Optometry can offer treatment to manage the conditions and improve your comfort.

- Artificial lubricating eye drops, ointments, and take-home therapies may be used.
- There are a variety of medicated eye drops that may be recommended.
- New procedures such as intense pulsed light (IPL), radiofrequency (RF), Bleph-Ex, or instruments that utilize a combination of directed heat and pulsatile pressure to the eyelids work to relieve obstructions of the meibomian glands and reduce inflammation.
- In cases of aqueous-deficient dry eye, small plugs may be inserted in the corner of the eyelids to slow drainage and loss of tears.
- Treating any underlying systemic disease.
- Changing or supplementing your diet to increase the intake of omega-3 fatty acids and reduce systemic inflammation can also be helpful.

New prescription medications are now available to help your body produce more of its own tears.

Optometrists complete a Bachelor of Science degree or higher, followed by a four year Doctor of Optometry degree from an accredited university. They are a primary source for all your vision, eye health and eyewear needs. If you do not currently have an optometrist, visit our website at www.optometrists.ab.ca and click on *Find an Optometrist*. This will provide a list of optometrists in your area.

For information about many other common eye-related conditions, visit our website's Eye Health Library.
optometrists.ab.ca/eyehealthlibrary