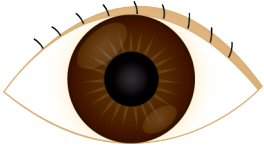


DRY EYE

WHAT IS DRY EYE?



Dry eye is a vision problem that occurs when the eyes are not properly lubricated. This condition can be due to lack of tears or poor quality tears.

Every time you blink, a thin layer of tear film is created to lubricate the eye. The tear film is composed of 3 layers. The oily layer is the outermost layer that creates a smooth tear surface and prevents tears from evaporating too quickly. The middle layer is the watery layer that makes up tears and keeps the eyes clean by removing unwanted debris. The mucus layer is the innermost layer that helps tears stick to the eye and keep the eye moist. If one of the layers is not working properly, then dry eye can occur.

The amount of tears produced can be affected by aging, chronic health problems, medications, environment, or lifestyle. As a person ages, the ability to produce tears naturally diminishes, especially for those over age 50. Post-menopausal women are at a greater risk for developing dry eyes when compared to men because of hormonal changes.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DRY EYE

- Medications for allergies, hormone replacement, birth control, depression, anxiety, Parkinson's disease, and high blood pressure
- Certain autoimmune disorders like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis
- Diabetes

- Thyroid disorder
- Vitamin A deficiency
- Prolonged wearing of contact lenses
- Excessive screen time (computer/cell phone/ TV screen)
- Windy, smoky, or extra dry environment

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DRY EYE

- Redness, stinging, burning, or irritation of the eyes
- Strings of mucus in or around the eye
- Overproduction of tears (your eyes produce more tears when irritated by dry eye)
- Pain when wearing contact lenses

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF DRY EYE

The first step in diagnosing dry eye is to schedule an appointment with an eye doctor (ophthalmologist). Your doctor can then discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

Treatment may include:

- A change in your current prescription medication
- Blinking more often or closing the eyes to keep the eyes moist
- Eyelid massage
- Warm compresses for the eyes
- Use of artificial tears or artificial tears gel/ointment
- Prescription eye drops to promote tear production
- Surgery to plug or close the tear ducts

References:

www.nei.nih.gov/health/dryeye

www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-dry-eye