



Patient Information

Dry Eyes

What are dry eyes?

In order to stay healthy and comfortable, your eyes need to be covered by a thin film of tears. The tears are produced by tear glands and are spread over the eye when you blink. In some people these tears are produced in very small amounts, or are of poor quality.

The result is that the tears become increasingly concentrated and damage the surface of the eyes. You may experience irritation, burning, redness and excessive blinking. It may even cause reflex watering in some people like when you peel onions.

Why do I have dry eyes?

This is a very common condition. The most common cause is your tears evaporating faster than they can be replaced. Occasionally it is associated with inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, which may need to be excluded.

Is it serious?

Although it can be very uncomfortable, in the early stages damage is unlikely to be serious and there are several things which you can do to help yourself.

What can I do about it?

The Eye doctor will suggest some preservative free ocular lubricants, known as artificial tears, to dilute your own tears. These can be bought over the counter and can be used whenever your eyes become uncomfortable. In some circumstances, these can be prescribed by your General Practitioner (GP).

You may have to use them very frequently, even hourly. You may also need to use a lubricating ointment at night. These will relieve the symptoms only and are not a cure.

You may need to try different types of artificial tears to find the ones that suit you best.

Avoid dry, smoky atmospheres. If your house or office is air-conditioned or centrally heated, ensure that the air doesn't get too dry. When using a computer or device take regular breaks, to rest your eyes. Houseplants, humidifiers or saucers of water on



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radiators can help. Dietary supplementation with Omega 3 fish oils may also be helpful.

Contact Details

Eye Clinic Triage, telephone: 01793 604868

Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 21:00

Saturday/Sunday/Bank Holidays: 09:00 to 13:00

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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