

## **DRY EYE SYNDROME**

Dry Eye Syndrome is actually a collection of symptoms that make up an eye condition that stems from symptoms include dry, red, gritty and even watery eyes. Often, dry eye sufferers report the feeling of something foreign within the eye or eye strain.

### **HOW DO TEARS FUNCTION?**

Tears bathe and lubricate the eyes. Each time you blink new tears are formed in the several glands located around each eye. A healthy tear film consists of a delicate balance of three layers:

- Outer Lipid (oily) layer- Reduces evaporation of the watery layer of tears
- Middle Aqueous (watery) Layer-98% water, cleanses the front surface of the eye.
- Inner Mucin (Mucus) Layer- Stabilizes the tear film.

### **WHAT CAUSES DRY EYE SYNDROME?**

The moisture level in the eye is maintained by the balance of tear production and tear loss through drainage and evaporation. When this balance is not sustained, dry spots appear on the eyes surface and cause irritation.

### **CAN WATERY EYES BE A SYMPTOM OF DRY EYE SYNDROME?**

Yes. As odd as it sounds, many dry eye sufferers experience “wet eye” due to the tear overproducing watery, or reflex tears to compensate for lack of a balanced tear film.

### **CAN DRY EYE HARM MY EYES?**

Yes. If untreated, severe Dry Eye Syndrome can damage tissue and possibly scar the cornea of the eye, leading to irreversible, sight threatening conditions.

### **CAN DRY EYE SYNDROME AFFECT MY ABILITY TO WEAR CONTACT LENSES?**

Yes. Dry Eye Syndrome is the leading cause of contact lens intolerance or discomfort. Contacts can cause tears to evaporate from the eyes causing irritation, protein deposits, infection and pain.

### **CAN DRY EYE SYNDROME BE CURED?**

There is no known cure for Dry Eye Syndrome although you can reduce your chances for complications.

### **HOW IS DRY EYE SYNDROME DIAGNOSED?**

Your eyecare professional can perform a simple, in-office diagnostic test to evaluate the quality and quantity of your tears. General health, medications and environmental factors will be considered in diagnosing dry eye.

## HOW IS DRY EYE SYNDROME TREATED?

Depending on the causes, Dry Eye Syndrome can be treated as a temporary problem or as a lifelong disease requiring long-term treatment. Either way, tears must be considered and/or replaced in order to provide relief.

### Replacing the Tears:

Artificial Tears are probably the most common form of treatment for Dry Eye symptoms. These will provide temporary relief, but prolonged use, artificial tears can actually disrupt the eye's natural production of tears and lead to further aggravation of the condition, washing away the natural infection fighting tear film on the eye.

### Punctal Plugs:

Punctal Plugs are the least invasive of the long term solutions to Dry Eye Syndrome. A small, soft silicone plug, about the size of a sesame seed, is non-surgically inserted into the natural punctal opening. The entire procedure can be performed in your doctor's office within a few minutes. Many patients report immediate relief from dry eye symptoms. Although silicone plugs are considered a permanent treatment for dry eye, your doctor can easily monitor and remove them if necessary.