

Dry Eye

The tears your eyes produce are necessary for overall eye health and clear vision. **Dry eye** means that your eyes do not produce enough tears or that you produce tears which do not have the proper chemical composition. Often, dry eye is part of the natural aging process. It can also be caused by blinking or eyelid problems, medications like antihistamines, oral contraceptives and antidepressants, a dry climate, wind and dust, general health problems like arthritis or Sjogren's syndrome and chemical or thermal burns to your eyes.

If you have dry eye, your symptoms may include irritated, scratchy, dry, uncomfortable or red eyes, a burning sensation or feeling of something foreign in your eyes and blurred vision. Excessive dry eyes may damage eye tissue, scar your cornea (the front covering of your eyes) and impair vision and make contact lens wear difficult.

If you have symptoms of dry eye, see your optometrist for a comprehensive examination. Dry eye cannot be cured, but your optometrist can prescribe treatment so your eyes remain healthy and your vision is unaffected. Some treatments that your optometrist might prescribe include blinking more frequently, increasing humidity at home or work, using artificial tears and using a moisturizing ointment, especially at bedtime. In some cases, small plugs are inserted in the corner of the eyes to slow tear drainage. Sometimes, surgical closure of the drainage ducts may be recommended.

