

Dry Eye

The eyes need constant lubrication which is provided by the tear glands.

Eyes become dry for two main reasons. Firstly, tears can evaporate too quickly. This can be on planes, in air conditioning, in dry air or smoky conditions. It is temporary and improved by use of lubricant drops and removing yourself (where possible) from the situation. Secondly it can be due to reduced tear production. This can be with advancing age, various medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lupus Sjogren's syndrome scleroderma), certain medications (e.g. antihistamines, antidepressants, blood pressure tablets), and tear gland damage through trauma.

Other risk factors include being female, use of contact lenses and having low vitamin A levels. Symptoms are a burning itching stinging or dry feeling in the eye. The eyes may become red and sensitive to light. Blurry vision can follow.

Diagnosis is largely on symptoms and a thorough eye examination. Blood tests would be done to rule out underlying conditions. You may be referred to an ophthalmologist.



Complications include eye infections and damage to the eye surface. Fortunately, these can be largely avoided.

Treatment depends on cause. In most cases you will be recommended eye drops to keep the eyes moist. These may be used multiple times a day. Avoiding situations where

dryness would be aggravated is important (where practical). Try to stay inside on windy days or when there is smoke in the air and wear sunglasses when outside. Take breaks when using screens for long periods of time and position your screen below eye level so you tend to look downwards. This can reduce evaporation.