

Dry Eyes

EYE FACTS

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The name implies the condition - not enough moisture to properly lubricate your eye. If you think you may have dry eyes, you should get your eyes examined ASAP.

Certain environmental conditions can also worsen these eye conditions. Among these are smoke, wind, dry air from heating and air conditioning, sunlight, lens care products and continual close-up work on the computer that can reduce blinking and cause eyestrain.

Wearing contact lens can also decrease the sensitivity of the cornea, which may lead to an insufficient production of tears. Arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome (an immune system disorder) and some prescription drugs - antihistamines, anti-diarrhea and anti-anxiety medications can worsen dry eyes. Situations like this often trigger tear production to compensate for the dryness - the eye's natural response system that does work in the "normal" eye. When the eye's natural mechanism gets out of synch, the production of effective tears is disrupted.

An untreated dry eye condition may lead to scarring or ulceration of the cornea, infections, and conjunctivitis and possibly loss of vision. Dry eyes are more common as you get older - as much as 75% of seniors have some form of dry eyes. Women are more prone to develop dry eyes especially when they are pregnant or during menopause.

While visiting an eye doctor, the doctor may give you a Schirmer Test to measure tear production. The Schirmer test uses small filtered paper strips that are placed inside the lower eyelid and measures the rate of your tear production.

Another procedure to test for dry eyes is the use of a tiny implant, (like a ¼ inch shaving of butter) painlessly placed into your tear drainage canals. This temporary closure of the punctum permits only a small fraction of tears to enter into the nasal passages causing a layer of tears to collect on the surface of your eye. Your body absorbs the implants over the course of a couple of days. This gives you and your doctor some time to assess the helpfulness in increasing tears on the surface of your eye. Acquired color vision loss can be the result of damage to the retina or optic nerve.

Your tear production mechanism is the culprit when you have dry eyes. Either 1) you do not have enough tears or the lubrication mechanism even from quality tears is sub par. Until they find a cure for lack of tear production, you can assist your eye health by limiting your intake of soft drinks, alcohol, chocolate, coffee and tea. These natural diuretics dry out your eyes and can worsen your condition. Adding a humidifier to add moisture to the air can also help.

The other case does not involve inadequate tear production but rather the coating that keeps the moisture from evaporating too quickly. When you blink, your eye is coated with secreted natural oil designed to prevent evaporation of the moisture (from tear production) in your eye. When the oil production mechanism is disturbed, the moisture from properly generated tears is lost.

How does Dry Eyes impact your ability to have LASIK Surgery?

If you are like many of the people affected by dry eyes seeking LASIK eye surgery, you are doing it because you cannot wear contact lenses. There are some challenges that you may have to overcome if you proceed with LASIK laser vision correction.

Many people experience dry eye after LASIK surgery. People with even mild dry eyes will likely be worse for up to at least six months after LASIK due to the reduction in tearing caused by the disruption of the nerves on the cornea. If you are willing to use frequent tears and ointments and put up with increased dry eyes you have a good chance to enjoy the sight improvement offered by LASIK eye surgery. You may even need temporary punctual plugs to get you through the tough times.

If you are one of the many dry eye patients with plugged oil glands, you need to be aware of the possible complications after LASIK. When after using a wet, warm towel to melt the clogged openings, your routine of massaging and squeezing the eyelids to spread out the now melted oil needs to be temporarily suspended. Massaging and pressing your eye after LASIK can dislodge the cut flap. Normal time before this self-treatment to unclog one's oil glands can continue is one month after LASIK surgery.