



MEDICAL CONDITIONS

CAUSES OF DRY EYES

Dry eyes are uncomfortable and occur when eyes fail to produce enough tears or when the tear production process is disrupted and can't produce good quality tears.

Symptoms of dry eyes include a stinging or scratchy sensation, sensitivity to light, eye redness, blurred vision or eye fatigue.

Dry eye causes:

1. *Hormonal changes*

Hormonal changes during pregnancy, menopause and ageing can cause dry eyes.

2. *Side effects of certain drugs*

Medications associated with dry eyes include beta-blockers, antihistamines, diuretics and antidepressants.

3. *Environment and activities*

Environmental factors (wind, sun, smoke, dry climate) and activities such as reading and working with computers can also have a drying effect on the eyes.

4. *Medical conditions*

Conditions such as allergic conjunctivitis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and HIV can also increase the risk of dry eyes.

Treatment options to consider:

- Over-the-counter lubricating eyedrops and ointments can help keep your eyes well lubricated.
- Warm compresses help to open clogged Meibomian glands (glands that secrete oil and coat the eye surface to prevent tears from evaporating). Apply a warm compress to the eyes for 10 minutes, twice daily.
- Nutritional supplements such as Omega-3 fatty acids can help decrease dry eye symptoms. Good sources include cold-water fish and flaxseed oil. Also, keep hydrated to lessen the discomfort.
- Humidifiers can add moisture to indoor air during winter or cold weather.
- Position your computer screen below eye level and take frequent eye breaks when engaging in tasks that require visual concentration for extended periods.

Pay attention to the situations that may be aggravating your symptoms and consult your optometrist or general practitioner should your symptoms worsen.