



Nine ways to relieve dry eye discomfort

by Edna Greig

Dry eye is a condition that occurs when the tear film does not adequately protect the eye's surface. The eye either does not produce enough tears, or the tears that are produced evaporate too quickly. The symptoms of dry eye include redness, burning, itchiness, stinging, excessive tearing, blurry vision, and sensitivity to light. More severe cases of dry eye can lead to damage to the eye's surface. Dry eye affects about 5 to 30% of adults and is more common in older people and in women.

Consult your eye doctor who can run tests to determine if you have dry eye and what may be causing it.

You can take the following steps to help relieve the discomfort of dry eye:

1. Avoid overly dry, dusty, or smoky environments. Use a humidifier and air filter to improve indoor air quality.

2. Take regular breaks from intense visual activities such as reading. During these breaks, do some rapid blinking to help restore the tear film.

3. Lower your computer's monitor to below eye level so that you look down at it. By doing this, less of the eye's surface is exposed to evaporation.

4. When outdoors, wear wraparound sunglasses that will help to protect the eyes from drying winds.

5. If you wear contact lenses, switch to glasses as often as possible.

6. Eat more fish or take an omega-3 supplement. It is believed that a higher dietary intake of this essential fatty acid may be associated with a lower incidence of dry eye.

7. Maintain good eyelid hygiene by cleansing with an over the counter product designed for this purpose. It also may help to apply warm compresses to the eyes once or twice daily.

8. Consult your doctor if you take medications that are known to contribute to dry eye symptoms, such as antihistamines, decongestants, diuretics, hormone replacement therapy, or blood pressure medications.

9. Finally, there is a wide variety of over-the-counter drops, gels, and ointments that can relieve the symptoms of dry eye. Consult your doctor or pharmacist to find out which is best for you.

This article was submitted by Edna Greig