



**ROYAL VICTORIA EYE AND EAR
HOSPITAL
ADELAIDE ROAD,
DUBLIN 2**

UNDERSTANDING DRY EYES

THE NORMAL ACTION OF TEARS

Normally your eyes are kept moist and comfortable by a film of tears. Glands in your eyelids make these tears. The action of blinking spreads the tears over the surface of the eye.

WHAT TEARS DO?

The tears contain substances that lubricate, prevent infection and slow down evaporation of the tears.

WHAT IS DRY EYE?

In some people tears are produced in very small amounts. Sometimes those produced are of very poor quality. This leads to small dry patches on the surface of the eye causing redness, irritation and excessive blinking.

SYMPTOMS OF DRY EYE

- Stinging, burning or a gritty feeling in your eye.
- Eyes may appear slightly red.
- Eyes may feel heavy.
- Eyes may seem sensitive to light.
- Excessive blinking.
- Irritation may lead to excessive watering.

These symptoms may be less when you first wake up but get worse as the day goes on.

FACTORS THAT MAY TRIGGER SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Times when you blink less often e.g. reading, driving, watching TV or computer work.
- ▶ Exposure to fumes, cigarette smoke or dust.
- ▶ Air conditioning.
- ▶ Heating.
- ▶ Hair dryers.

CAUSES OF DRY EYES

- ▶ The most common cause is the failure of the glands in your eyelids to produce tears.
- ▶ Certain medicines used to treat other medical conditions can reduce tear production e.g. high blood pressure, kidney disease.
- ▶ Less often dry eye may be a symptom of another medical condition.
- ▶ Incomplete eyelid closures leaves the eye exposed to drying.

TESTS FOR DRY EYE

The eye specialist will examine the surface of your eye for damage and assess your tear production.

TREATMENT OF DRY EYE

The main treatment is the use of artificial tear drops. These can be used as often as is needed to keep your eyes comfortable. Ointments are also available which are usually used at night.

Severe dry eyes may be relieved by blocking the channel that drains tears into the nose. This keeps more tears on the surface of the eye. It can be done on a temporary or permanent basis.

TIPS ON HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

- Avoid places where fumes, dust or smoke will irritate your eyes.
- Try to blink more often when reading or watching TV.
- Use humidifiers at home and work (especially where there is air conditioning).
- Do not direct fans towards your eyes.
- Take short breaks when doing computer work.
- Wear wrap around glasses out-doors to stop the wind from drying your eyes.