

Dry Eye Syndrome

Can dry eye syndrome affect my ability to wear contact lenses?

Yes. Dry eye syndrome is one of the leading causes of contact lens intolerance or discomfort. Contact lens can cause tears to evaporate from the eyes causing irritation, protein deposits, infection, and pain.

How is dry eye syndrome diagnosed?

Dry eye syndrome is diagnosed by tests and procedures done in the eye clinic that assess tear stability and amount of tear production. Some patients are not aware that they have symptoms of dry eyes until they consult an ophthalmologist.

How is dry eye syndrome treated?

Common treatments of dry eye syndrome include lifestyle changes and the use of eye drops. For more serious cases of dry eyes, surgery may be an option.

Lifestyle changes such as reduced contact lens wear, lowering of height of computer monitors, less exposure to air conditioning and a balanced diet with sufficient Omega-3 lipid components can have a significant impact on the control of dry eyes.

In cases of dry eyes that do not have clinical damage to the ocular surface (staining or keratitis), it is considered safe for patients to attempt to control the condition using over-the-counter medications called lubricants. Your ophthalmologist will advise you whether you have any ocular and systemic diseases. He/she will also advise you on drugs that can aggravate dry eyes and what to do in those circumstances.

Severe dry eye can be treated using more sophisticated methods such as steroids, punctal occlusion or surgery to close the lids.

LOCATION MAP



This patient information leaflet is a general guide to help patients understand specific eye conditions, treatment or tests. The information does not replace the need for individual advice from an ophthalmologist. Please consult with your ophthalmologist about your specific eye condition and/or concerns.

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Singapore National Eye Centre Company Registration No. 198900840W

Singapore National Eye Centre

11 Third Hospital Avenue, Singapore 168751

Appointments: (65) 6227 7266 Fax: (65) 6226 1884

Email: appointments@snecc.com.sg

Website: www.snecc.com.sg

/@SNEC.SERI

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SYNDROME

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What is dry eye syndrome?

Dry eye syndrome occurs when you do not produce enough tears or the composition of the tears is abnormal and cannot adequately cover the surface of the eye.

The tear film is an essential part for ensuring the overall health of the ocular surface. It cleanses, lubricates and nourishes the surface of the eye as well as protecting it against infection. Both the quality and quantity of the tears must be maintained within certain levels to ensure a healthy and clear refractive surface essential for good vision.

Chronic dry eye can lead to damage of the eye's surface, an increased risk of eye infections, and eventually the inability to produce tears. Left untreated, severe forms of dry eye can even damage your vision.

What causes dry eye syndrome?

Dry eyes are caused by a lack of adequate tears. Your tears are a complex mixture of three basic layers – oil, water and mucus. This mixture helps make the surface of your eyes smooth and clear, and it helps protect your eyes from infection. Problems with any of these layers can cause dry eye syndrome.

The outer layer (oil layer) is produced by the meibomian glands that line the edge of the upper and lower eyelids. The water layer is produced by the lacrimal gland located under the orbital rim bone just below the eyebrow. The mucus layer is produced by microscopic goblet cells in the conjunctiva.

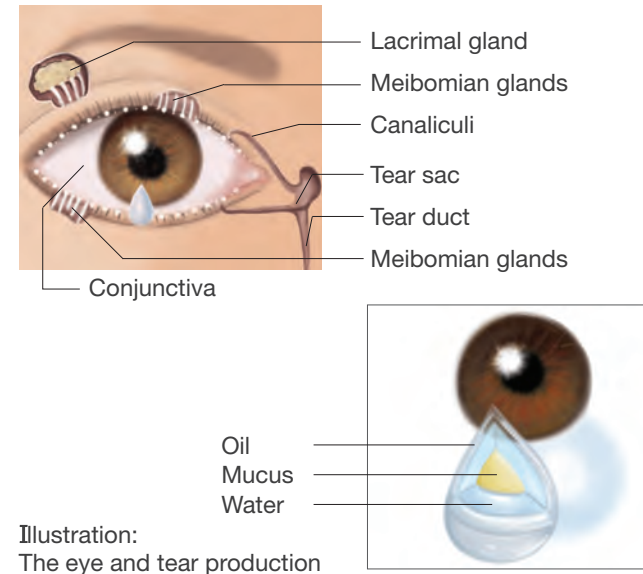


Illustration:
The eye and tear production

For some people, the cause of dry eyes may be due to an imbalance in the composition of their tears, or they do not produce enough tears to keep their eyes comfortably lubricated. Age, eyelid problems, certain ocular and systemic diseases and medications, and other causes such as environmental factors and hormonal changes can also lead to dry eyes.

What are the symptoms?

You may have dry eye syndrome if you are having:

- Redness or irritation of the eye
- Heaviness of the eyelid
- Foreign body or sandy sensation in the eyes
- Watery eyes which may be due to reflex tearing. The tear properties may be altered in dry eye so that there is insufficient protection of the ocular surface, resulting in irritation and reflex tearing.
- Transient blurring of vision