

Information for Patients

Dry Eyes

What is Dry Eye?

You have been diagnosed as having dry eye/s. This means that your eyes may not be making enough tears or that the tears which you are making are of a poor quality.

The normal function of the tears is to keep the surface of the eye wet and lubricated so any shortage of tears or reduction in their quality can make your eyes feel sore, gritty or as if they are burning.

Dry eye/s can be associated with ageing and once the ability to produce quality tears is lost it rarely returns. Occasionally it can also be associated with other conditions such as arthritis.

What is the treatment?

Dry eye/s is treated with artificial tears and sometimes lubricating ointment. Artificial tear drops can moisten your eyes and relieve discomfort. The doctor or nurse practitioner will advise you on how frequently you will need to use your drops. Initially this may be every hour or more frequently.

If your eyes dry out during the night, you may find it difficult to open them in the morning and your eyelids may stick together. Using a lubricating ointment on your eyes before you go to bed may help; the doctor or nurse practitioner will advise you.

Your treatment must be used regularly. If you stop using it, your symptoms will come back. Try to avoid dry or smoky places as these make dry eyes worse. Using room humidifiers may help.

Occasionally the dryness is very severe and treatment with drops and ointment does not work. There are other treatments available. You should ask the doctor or nurse treating you or ask your GP to refer you to a consultant ophthalmologist.

Take your eye drops with you if you are going away from home. Always keep a spare bottle so that you do not run out.

It is important that you use a new bottle of eye drops or ointment every 4 weeks, even if the bottle or tube is not empty. This helps to prevent contamination and possible infection. Please remember to wash your hands before and after treatment.