

Information for Patients

Insertion of Punctum Plugs for dry eye(s)

What is dry eye(s)?

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

The normal function of 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.

How punctum plugs help?

Punctum plugs are small soft plugs used to block the tear duct opening and help to store up tears giving relief from the symptoms of dry eye. Blocking the tear drainage duct opening allows the tears that are produced to stay on the surface of the eye longer. Some patients will get relief soon after the plugs have been put in, whilst for others it is a gradual process.

How are the plugs put in?

The procedure is very simple and is carried out during your appointment at the outpatient clinic. A drop of local anaesthetic is put into your eye to numb the front surface. The doctor/nurse practitioner will then put the plugs in the opening of the tear duct, which is usually painless.

Do I still need to use my lubricating eye drops?

Yes, you will still need your lubricating drops, but you will not have to use them as often. The doctor/nurse practitioner will advise you of this.

Care of your punctum plugs

The punctum plugs are designed for easy removal, which should only be done by your eye doctor/nurse practitioner. As the plugs are designed to be removed it is possible that you could accidentally dislodge or lose the plug. In order to reduce this risk you should:

- Avoid rubbing your eye.
- Remove any 'sleep' from the corner of your eye with a clean, moist, cotton tipped applicator.

If you dislodge or lose your plug, do not worry it can be replaced. Do not try to replace a dislodged plug yourself.

If you are concerned that your plug has become dislodged or lost or you experience any pain or discomfort that seems related to the insertion of your plugs please contact your consultant's secretary. The telephone number can be found on the front of your appointment card. This is not an emergency.

If you are worried or wish to ask any questions about this information, please contact the Oculoplastic specialist nurse on (0161) 276 5608.

To speak to Ward 55 staff please contact the main hospital switchboard on: (0161) 276 1234, available 24 hours a day.