

## Dry eyes

### What does this mean?

This is a very common condition. Your eyes make two types of tears, one oily and the other water. The front of your eye is bathed by the tears as you blink, keeping the surface moist. If you do not make enough of one or the other type of tears your eyes become dry.

### What causes dry eye?

This occurs when the tear gland does not make enough tears. This may happen as you get older, or as part of another illness.

### What will I feel?

Your eyes may:

- burn
- itch
- feel gritty
- be slightly red.

These symptoms may occur more frequently in dry, warm environments, or in a smoky atmosphere.

### How does the doctor diagnose this?

The doctor may ask for a tear test. This is not a painful procedure. He or she will put two very small pieces of blotting paper on the lower lids of your eyes. You sit with your eyes closed for five minutes.

After this time the amount of tears that have been absorbed on the blotting paper tell the doctor if you have dry eyes.

## **How is it treated?**

There is no cure. The aim of the treatment is to help your symptoms. The usual treatment is:

- artificial tear drops
- ointment.

The drops and ointment will comfort your eyes and prevent damage to their surface.

The drops can be used as often as you need them, but at least four times a day. Use the drops more often if your symptoms come back again. You will usually have to use the drops for the rest of your life.

Use the ointment at night to stop your eyes becoming dry while you are asleep.

## **How can I help myself?**

Try to avoid dry and smoky conditions. A room humidifier or a dish of water by the heater may help.

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