



Top 5 Q&A: Dry Eye Disease

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1. How do I know if I have Dry Eye Disease?

Dry Eye Disease (DED), also known as Ocular Surface Disease (OSD), has many signs and symptoms. Dry eye disease is a chronic and progressive disease. Symptoms you may experience include: dryness, grittiness, scratchiness, foreign body sensation, burning, stinging, redness, fluctuations in vision that clear with blinking, eye fatigue, and excessive tearing. There are many tests your optometrist at Eyes for Life will perform to determine if your symptoms can be contributed to DED.

2. My eyes water, how can I have dry eyes?

Excessive tearing is a common sign of dry eye disease. Your tear film is made of three layers: a mucin (mucous) layer, an aqueous (water) layer, and a lipid (oil) layer. If your oil layer is deficient, your tears evaporate faster and you experience dryness, which results in excessive tearing. Unfortunately, these reflex tears are not healthy tears and do not have the nutritional components to keep your eye feeling moist and healthy. Other causes of reflex tears are inflammation on the surface of your eyes as well as high tear osmolarity (salt content). At Eyes for Life, we perform tests that will assess eye surface inflammation and tear osmolarity.

3. What causes dry eye disease?

There are many potential causes of dry eye disease. It has been reported that the prevalence of dry eyes is 5-35%. That means as high as 1 in 3 people will have some level of dry eye disease. Women and those over the age of 50 are at higher risk for dry eyes. Other causes of DED are meibomian gland dysfunction and blepharitis, two common eye diseases that can cause evaporative DED. Certain medications can cause dryness, these include: birth control, anti-depressants, and medications for allergy, acne, and high blood pressure. Systemic diseases can increase risk for DED, these include: diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, thyroid disease, and Sjogren's syndrome. Environmental factors such as smoking, extreme heat or cold, air conditioning/heating, and air pollutants can also cause dry eye symptoms. Prolonged reading or computer/phone use decreases your blink rate which can lead to dry eyes. Other things that can cause dryness are wearing contact lenses and refractive surgery such as LASIK and PRK.

4. What are my treatment options?

There are many treatment options for dry eye disease depending on the classification and category. The standard initial treatment is artificial tear eye drops, lid scrubs, Omega-3 supplements and warm compresses. Here at Eyes for Life we also have advanced technology treatment for meibomian gland dysfunction and blepharitis, the two most common causes of DED. These advanced technology treatment options include meibomian gland expression and BlephEx. Your optometrist may also consider adding a supplement called EZ Tears which has been proven to improve tear film quality and resolve signs and symptoms. Your optometrist may also consider starting you on prescription eye drops called Restasis. Restasis is the most commonly prescribed drop for dry eyes and has been shown to increase tear production and reduce inflammation. Your optometrist will determine the best customized treatment based on your signs and symptoms.

5. Is there a cure for my dry eyes?

There is no cure for dry eye disease. Treatment is aimed at improving the health of the surface of your eyes as well as treating symptoms. The treatment is often a stepwise approach and should be viewed as a marathon, not a sprint. Often times the signs and symptoms of DED have been causing damage to the surface of the eyes for months to years and it may require months to years of treatment before signs and symptoms are managed.