

## Dry Eye

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### Diagnosis of Dry Eye

The symptoms of dry eye include feeling gritty, sandy, scratchy, or feeling as if something is in the eye like an eyelash. The symptoms can vary during the day and from day to day. The symptoms tend to be worse at times with low humidity (winter, in air conditioning). Patients who wear contact lenses and have dry eyes will notice the lenses more and have to reduce the wearing time of the lenses.

### Treatment of dry eyes.

1. Drink more water. One symptom of mild dehydration is a feeling of dry eye. Drink several glasses of water and continue throughout the day.
2. Some prescription medicines, especially antihistamines and anti-depressants can aggravate dry eyes. Try to reduce or eliminate if possible these medicines. Check with your doctor before changing these medicines.
3. Use of artificial tears. There are hundreds of different brands but only two basic types: Preserved tears and Preservative Free Tears. Preserved Tears are packaged in bottles and can be used up to four times a day. Preservative Free tears come in little plastic vials and can be used as often as you wish but the vials should be discarded after a few hours. For bedtime use a preservative free ointment which will keep the eyes moist at night.
4. For your bedroom you can buy a humidifier to raise the moisture in the air. Also if you have a small office this might help.
5. Warm compresses. Microwave a moistened washcloth until hot (but not scalding- test with hand first) and then apply to closed eyelids while lightly massaging lids. When cloth cools, repeat this several times.
6. A prescription eyedrop Restasis (cyclosporine). This medicine in tablet form is used to treat patients to prevent rejection of organ transplants but the dose of the eyedrop is much, much lower than the dose in the tablet. We now think that dry eyes are caused in part by inflammation of the tear glands and Restasis reduces the inflammation in the tear glands and has been shown to increase tear production. It often takes 3-4 months before Restasis improves the comfort of the eyes. Restasis may cause burning when used- this is usually mild. At times I will prescribe a mild steroid eye drop along with the Restasis to reduce the burning and reduce the inflammation of the eyes. The steroid generally should not be used for more than several weeks.