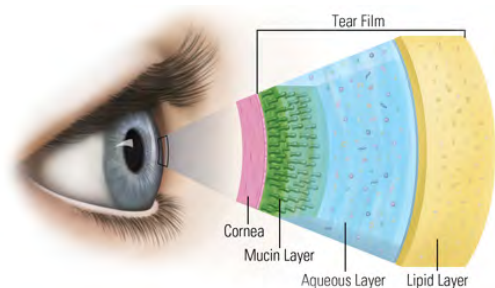


DRY EYE SYNDROME

Dry eye is a condition in which there are insufficient tears to lubricate and nourish the eye. Tears are necessary for maintaining the health of the front surface of the eye and for providing clear vision. People with dry eyes either do not produce enough tears or have a poor quality of tears. Dry eye is a common and often chronic problem, particularly in older adults.

How can I have Dry Eye Syndrome if one of my symptoms is “watering” or “tearing” eyes?



A soothing, lubricating tear film covers the eyeball. This tear film is composed of three layers:

- A layer of Mucus (against the eyeball)
- A layer of Water (the in-between layer)
- A layer of Oil (“cap” over the other layers)

(continued on reverse...)

These three layers must be in perfect volume and relationship to each other in order to do their job appropriately.

In dry eye syndrome, it is common for the “water” content to be diminished to the point where the mucus and oil layers begin to touch and mix together. This results in poorly functioning tear film where there is often stringy mucus. The symptoms of burning, stinging, a gritty/sandy feeling, foreign body sensation, and excess tearing are common.

Our body becomes aware of these symptoms and tries to compensate or fix this problem the only way it can. Our lacrimal glands start producing water as an attempt to repair the disparity. But it ends up creating an imbalance in the layers, so when the water comes in contact with the defective mucus and oil tear film it runs off (like water off a duck’s back) resulting in tearing or watering eyes.

There are other causes of watering eyes such as a narrowed or blocked tear drainage, but usually excessive tearing results from inadequate tear film function system.

Artificial tears can be used to attempt to replace and restore a normally functioning tear film. Proper and frequent use of good quality artificial tears is the best way to treat it. Since frequent drops are usually necessary, it is best to use a preservative-free artificial tear to avoid any toxic effect.

There is no known “cure” for dry eyes, and therapy is usually life long. Thus, it is important to work with your doctor to achieve the best results for controlling your symptoms.

(608) 342.2020

1450 Eastside Road • Platteville, WI 53818
SouthwestHealth.org