



Patient Education Sheet

Simple Solutions for Dry Eye

The SSF thanks J. Daniel Nelson, MD, Associate Medical Director, Specialty Care HealthPartners Medical Group & Clinics, and Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, for authoring this Patient Education Sheet.

► One of the main goals in treating dry eye is to make you more comfortable!

Unless specifically ordered by your doctor, stop treatments that make you feel worse.

- Apply a warm, wet compress to the closed eyes using a washcloth heated in tolerably warm water from the sink or shower. Apply at bedtime and upon awakening for 5 minutes or more often if desired.
- Carefully clean the eyelids with warm water or one of the commercially available eyelid cleansers or baby shampoo (avoid any that are irritating), and keep the upper and lower eyelids free of facial creams at bedtime. Anything applied to the eyelids will get into the tear film and can irritate the eye.
- Use non-preserved artificial tears frequently and regularly, even when your eyes feel good. Don't wait until your eyes are uncomfortable.
- When starting a new, preservative-free artificial tear, use the drops every 1-2 hours for at least two weeks before reducing frequency of use. When you taper their use, see if your symptoms worsen. It often is easier to determine feeling worse than better.
- Most artificial tears vary in two important ways - preservatives and thickness or viscosity. If you use artificial tears more than four times a day, use non-preserved preparations. If your vision is blurred with artificial tear use, try a less viscous preparation.
- Try ointments or gels at bedtime by first applying them only to the eyelids and lashes. If that is not helpful, place ~1/4 inch of ointment between the lower lid and eyeball. Because it blurs their vision, some individuals may not like using it.
- Sleep is important for maintaining eye comfort. If you are not sleeping well, see your primary physician for help.
- Wear wrap-around glasses or goggles when outside to provide protection from the environment and to create more humidity around the eyes.
- If you are bothered by light, wear sunglasses or try lenses with a FL-41 filter.
- Humidify your environment in cold weather. Use a bedside humidifier at night, and add a humidifier to your furnace.
- Pollutants and allergens are more concentrated in the tear film of dry eye patients. In hot weather, sleep with the windows shut and keep cool with air conditioning.
- Dry eye patients often develop or aggravate allergies. An over-the-counter allergy drop (even if preserved) used twice daily may help.
- Cold compresses help itchy eyes due to allergies. Warm compresses work best for dry eye symptoms of burning and sand-gravel sensations.
- Anticipate times of the day, week or month when your symptoms are worse, and use artificial tears and warm compresses as a preventive measure. Symptoms may vary with changes in the weather, changes in locale (at work versus at home), and, in women, with the menstrual cycle.

For more information on Sjögren's syndrome, visit the SSF Web site at www.sjogrens.org, call 800-475-6473, e-mail ssf@sjogrens.org or write to the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation, 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817.

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