

Dry eye

Eye Clinic

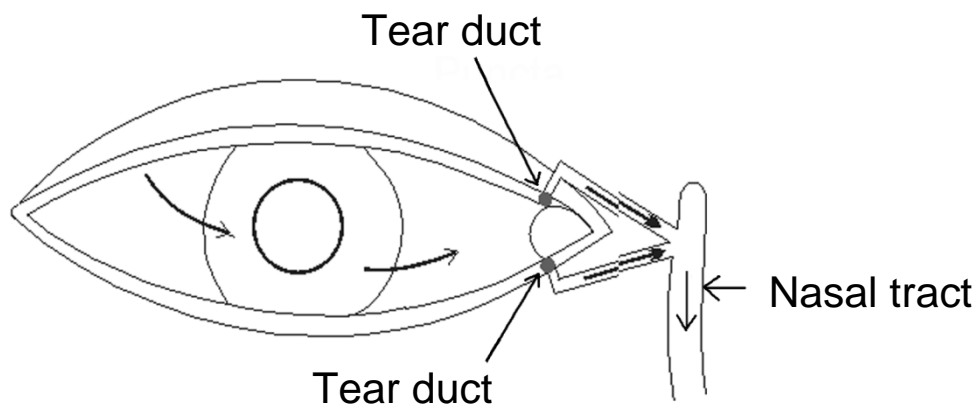
Tel: 01271 322467

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

What is dry eye?

Dry eye is characterized by insufficient tears, causing dryness of the conjunctiva (white of the eye) and the cornea (clear window in front of the coloured iris). Tears lubricate, clean and nourish the cornea. Tears are spread over the surface of your eye by blinking, they drain away into the nose and throat through small drainage ducts, as shown in the diagram below.



What causes dry eye?

Insufficient tears produced by the tear gland will cause the surface of the eye to become dry. This may occur in older people or may be associated with conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

A lack of the oily component of the tears can cause an uneven covering of tears on the surface of the eye, or allow the tears to evaporate too quickly or run straight off the surface of the eye.

The surface of the eye can become dry if there is a problem with blinking or the eyelids are unable to close properly during sleep.

In most cases, if there are no other associated conditions, the cause of dry eye syndrome is unknown.

What are the symptoms?

- Irritable, sore eyes
- Gritty sensation/ foreign body sensation
- Burning sensation
- Excessive watering
- In some people, blurred vision

How is it diagnosed?

Simple tests are carried out to determine whether enough tears are being produced and if the tears are covering the surface of the eye.

How is it treated?

Replacement tears in the form of eye drops are used to treat dry eyes.

A lubricating ointment may be prescribed to put in your eyes at night.

The frequency of your artificial tears prescribed may vary depending on the severity of your dry eye. The drops and ointment must be used regularly; they will ease the discomfort and prevent damage to the surface of your eye.

The condition of dry eyes cannot be reversed, so when your symptoms improve you must continue to use your treatment for life.

Your GP will be able to provide further prescriptions for the treatment prescribed for your dry eye.

Dry or smoky atmospheres may make your symptoms of dry eye worse.

Disposal of eye drops or ointment

Most eye drops and ointments have a shelf life of one month once opened, unless otherwise specified. Please return expired medication to your pharmacist for safe disposal.

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns please ask any member of the medical or nursing team or contact the Eye Clinic, Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 1pm.

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PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

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Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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