

Dry eye is a common condition that occurs when the eyes do not make enough tears or the tears evaporate too quickly.

This leads to the eyes drying out and becoming inflamed (red and swollen) and irritated.

The symptoms of dry eye syndrome usually affect both eyes and often include:

- feelings of dryness, grittiness or soreness that get worse throughout the day
- [red eyes](#)
- eyelids that stick together when you wake up
- temporarily blurred vision, which usually improves when you blink

Dry eye syndrome can occur when the complex tear production process is disrupted in some way. There are many different reasons why this can happen, although a single identifiable cause is not often found.

Common causes include:

- being in a hot or windy climate
- wearing contact lenses
- certain underlying medical conditions, such as [blepharitis](#) (inflammation of the eyelids)
- side effects of certain medications
- hormonal changes, such as during the [menopause](#) (when a woman's periods stop)

Although the condition can affect people of any age, your chances of developing dry eye syndrome increase as you get older. It's estimated that up to one in every three people over the age of 65 experiences problems with dry eyes.

Dry eye syndrome is also more common in women than men.

Dry eye syndrome is not usually a serious condition.

Treatments are available to help relieve the symptoms, which include eye drops to lubricate the eyes, medications to reduce any inflammation, and (if necessary) surgery to prevent tears from draining away easily.

If dry eye syndrome is caused by an underlying condition, treating this condition will usually help relieve the symptoms.

As well as medical treatments, there are some things you can do yourself to help prevent dry eye syndrome or reduce the symptoms.

These include:

- keeping your eyes and eyelids clean and protecting them from dusty, smoky, windy and dry environments
- using your computer or laptop correctly to avoid eye strain
- using a humidifier to moisten the air
- eating a healthy diet that includes omega-3 fats

Dry eye syndrome may be uncomfortable, but does not usually cause any serious problems. In rare cases, severe untreated dry eye syndrome can cause scarring of the eye's surface, leading to [visual impairment](#).

Contact your GP or visit [your nearest accident and emergency \(A&E\) department](#) immediately if you have any of the following symptoms, as they could be a sign of a more serious condition:

- extreme sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- very red or painful eyes
- a deterioration in your vision

Disclaimer: This information leaflet is produced to help increase awareness regarding blepharitis. It is not intended to replace professional medical advice or to provide advice in any special individual circumstance. Please seek expert medical advice regarding your specific medical condition.