



ASK THE OPTOMETRIST

ASK THE OPTOMETRIST IS A SERIES OF INFORMATION NEWSLETTERS THAT WE ARE PLEASED TO PROVIDE OUR PATIENTS TO ELABORATE ON A VARIETY OF RELEVANT EYECARE TOPICS.

DRY EYE

Q1: WHAT IS DRY EYE?

DRY EYE IS SIMPLY A LACK OF MOISTURE ON THE SURFACE OF THE EYE. EVERYONE DEPENDS UPON TEARS TO KEEP THEIR EYES COMFORTABLE AND HEALTHY. FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, INCLUDING ADVANCING AGE, GENERAL HEALTH CONDITIONS (AND MANY MEDICATIONS USED IN THEIR TREATMENT), AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS, MANY OF US WILL EXPERIENCE THE SYMPTOMS OF INSUFFICIENT TEAR VOLUME – SYMPTOMS THAT CAN RANGE FROM MILD IRRITATION TO SIGHT-THREATENING SCARRING.

Q2: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DRY EYE?

IRONICALLY, ONE OF THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DRY EYE IS **EXCESSIVE WATERING**, PARTICULARLY IN SITUATIONS WHERE TEAR EVAPORATION IS INCREASED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE DECREASED BLINKING THAT ACCOMPANIES TASKS LIKE READING AND COMPUTER USE IS A COMMON TRIGGER. DRY ENVIRONMENTS (LARGE BUILDINGS, AIRPLANES), MOVING AIR (A BREEZE OUTDOORS, OR THE DEFROST VENT IN THE CAR) AND **CONTACT LENS WEAR** FURTHER INCREASE EVAPORATION. **THE EYE MAY FEEL GRITTY, SANDY, OR BEGIN TO STING; BLURRED VISION OFTEN FOLLOWS.** SYMPTOMS TYPICALLY WORSEN AS THE DAY PROGRESSES, BUT CAN BE APPARENT UPON AWAKENING, WHEN OVERNIGHT MUCOUS ACCUMULATION LEAVES ‘SLEEP’ IN THE CORNER OF THE EYE.

Q3: HOW WILL MY OPTOMETRIST DIAGNOSE DRY EYE?

THE DIAGNOSIS OF DRY EYE IS OFTEN MADE BASED UPON THE TYPICAL SYMPTOMS OUTLINED ABOVE. A DETAILED CASE HISTORY, INCLUDING QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL HEALTH, MEDICATIONS, AND WORKPLACE IS IMPORTANT. YOUR OPTOMETRIST WILL ALSO EXAMINE THE SURFACE OF YOUR EYE USING A MICROSCOPE, AND MAY EMPLOY TINTED DROPS (STAINS) TO HIGHLIGHT AREAS OF DRYNESS.

Q4: WHAT CAN BE DONE IF I HAVE DRY EYE?

FIRST OF ALL, THE MORE ACCURATE QUESTION MAY BE ‘WHAT CAN BE DONE **WHEN** I HAVE DRY EYE?’ – MOST OF US WILL EXPERIENCE DRY EYE AT SOME POINT IN OUR LIVES. ELDERLY PATIENTS, FEMALES, AND CONTACT LENS WEARERS ARE PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE. BECAUSE IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO INCREASE TEAR PRODUCTION, YOUR OPTOMETRIST WILL FOCUS ON SUPPLEMENTING OR RETAINING YOUR NATURAL TEARS. MANY LUBRICATING DROPS ARE AVAILABLE; HOWEVER, NOT ALL ARE EQUALLY EFFECTIVE – YOUR OPTOMETRIST CAN RECOMMEND A PRODUCT BASED UPON YOUR UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS. THAT BEING SAID, MOTHER NATURE IS THE BEST CHEMIST – YOUR OPTOMETRIST MAY SUGGEST REVERSIBLE BLOCKAGE OF THE TEAR DRAINAGE DUCTS TO KEEP MORE NATURAL TEARS IN YOUR EYE.