



Dry Eyes

Patient information leaflet



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Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your condition.

The eyes become dry when they do not make enough tears, or when the tears dry up too quickly. Usually this happens in both eyes, but sometimes only one eye is affected. Dry eyes can be itchy, sore, red and gritty. The eyes may water, be sensitive to light, and vision may be blurred at times. People with dry eyes may find wearing contact lenses uncomfortable.

Anyone can get dry eyes, but it is more likely to develop in people who:

- are over the age of 50 years old
- wear contact lenses
- look at computer screens for a long time
- are in an air conditioned, dry, windy, cold or dusty environment
- smoke or drink alcohol
- take certain medicines (such as some antidepressants or blood pressure medicines)
- have certain medical conditions (such as blepharitis)



Treatment and Prevention

Environmental and lifestyle changes

To help your eyes feel better:

- use a humidifier to make the air less dry
- avoid wearing eye make-up
- lower computer screens to just below eye level and take regular screen breaks
- limit how much you wear contact lenses or wear glasses instead
- talk to your pharmacist about your current medicines – they could be making your eyes dry
- if you smoke, try to stop – [free NHS help is available](#)
- if you drink alcohol, have less than 14 units of alcohol a week, spread across at least 3 days (there is no safe drinking level)

Cleaning your eyelids every day can also help with dry eyes.

1. Soak a flannel in warm (not hot) water and gently press it on the area around your eyes. This makes the oil produced by the glands around your eyes runnier.
2. Gently massage your eyelids with your finger or a cotton bud. This pushes the oils out of the glands.
3. Soak some cotton wool in warm (not hot) water and gently wipe away any excess oil, crusts or grime that might have built up.

For help with finding out why you have dry eyes, see an Eye Health Examination Wales (EHEW) accredited optometrist for a free eye health examination.



Treatment and Prevention

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you.

If you use treatments to help with your dry eye symptoms, use them alongside changes to your living environment and lifestyle.

Your pharmacist may recommend an eye drop or ointment. Some of these contain preservatives that can cause mild irritation so do not use them with contact lenses. Your pharmacist may recommend a preservative-free option if it is more suitable for you.

Eye drops

Eye drops for dry eyes (often called artificial tears) can help to relieve dry eye symptoms during the day time.

Your pharmacist may suggest **hypromellose eye drops**, **carbomer '980' eye drops** or **polyvinyl eye drops**.

Ointments

For night time use, your pharmacist may suggest an eye ointment such as **liquid paraffin with white soft paraffin and wool alcohols**. The ointment soothes and lubricates the eyes overnight. Do not use eye ointment during the day as it can make the artificial tear drops less effective and can make your vision blurry.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).



When to Get Help

Contact your GP if you have:

- other symptoms such as unexplained weight loss or fever

Contact your local accredited optometrist if you have:

- trouble or pain when moving your eyes (contact the optometrist now)
- flashing lights or wavy lines in your vision (contact the optometrist now)
- changes to the shape of your eyelids
- dry eyes after trying treatments for 4 to 6 weeks
- any other concerns about your sight

Go to your local emergency eye department, A&E, or call 111 urgently if you have:

- severe pain in your eyes
- loss of vision
- sudden changes to your sight, for example double vision
- swelling or redness around your eye
- a red eye with headache, pain or sensitivity to light

If you are worried that your condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your optometrist or GP.



More information

For more information on dry eyes or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dry-eyes/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/eye-care/eye-problems/dry-eyes>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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