



Health Notes

from the Lilydale Pharmacy

DRY EYES.

"Dry eye" is a very common condition and a trigger for many eye complaints such as eye infections and allergy reactions. Dry eye is a condition that occurs when the eyes don't make enough tears. It is most common in people over the age of 50, women after menopause and contact lens wearers. However, our lifestyle, occupation and surroundings can also cause dry eye. Hot, dry, windy weather makes the eyes dry. Air conditioning and heating in offices and homes will lead to dry eye as well. Long hours staring at TV, computer screens and books; and air pollutants such as cigarette smoke are other contributing factors.

Dry eye symptoms can include burning, itching, stinging, soreness, grittiness, sensitivity to light and the feeling that "there is something in the eye".

Tears, which are part of the eye's natural defence mechanism, are not just water. They are made up of several components, which nourish and protect the eyes. So although the eyes become "watery" in association with a dry eye condition, this fluid may not provide sufficient lubrication or nourishment to the surface of the eye.

Some medicines have the potential to cause dry eye; such as some which are used to treat high blood pressure, diuretics or fluid tablets, some anti-depressants, some anti-histamines and sedatives.

If you are a dry eye sufferer, then you should consider the regular use of eye drops. However, not all eye drops are suitable for treating dry eye so check with your pharmacist. Tear replacement products such as Liquifilm Tears, Vis-med or Poly-Tears can be used as often as necessary. If you use contact lenses, only some drops are suitable (e.g. Poly-Tears and Vis-med).

Eye drop bottles should be discarded one month after opening to prevent contamination; but if you need drops only now and again, products such as Vis-med or Refresh, which come as a box of single-use vials of artificial tears, are the ideal alternative. These drops contain no preservative, so they are also suitable for contact lens wearers.

Lubricating eye ointments are more effective, but can blur the vision, so they are usually only used at night.