

## EXPERIENCING DRY EYES IN THE SPRING? KEEP AN EYE ON SEASONAL ALLERGIES

*The Wisconsin Optometric Association advises seeing your optometrist for proper treatment of allergic conjunctivitis*

**MADISON, WI** - For most Americans, the start of spring is welcomed by thoughts of warmer weather, beautiful flowers, and picnics in the park. However, for the millions of Americans who suffer from allergies, the early signs of spring more closely resemble sneezing, coughing, and itchy, watery eyes. The good news for those suffering with the discomfort associated with eye allergies is that a simple visit to your doctor of optometry can help soothe symptoms.

According to the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA), many people suffer from "allergic conjunctivitis," which is the inflammation of the tissue lining the eyelids (conjunctiva) due to a reaction from allergy-causing substances such as pollen, mold, dust mites, and pet dander. The American Optometric Association's (AOA) Seventh Annual American Eye-Q® survey found that the most commonly reported symptoms associated with seasonal allergies are itchy eyes, watery eyes, red or irritated eyes, and dry eyes. In addition, 42 percent of those who responded stated that they suffered from seasonal eye allergies and 40 percent reported experiencing dry eyes.

While antihistamines can help with typical allergy symptoms such as runny noses and sneezing, the medication could actually make ocular symptoms worse. So, how can those who suffer from seasonal eye allergies get relief? According to 2013 WOA President and Milwaukee and Madison area optometrist Dr. Kellye Knueppel, "To effectively treat and relieve the symptoms caused by eye allergies, patients should see their eye doctor. In most cases, we can soothe allergy-related conjunctivitis with prescriptions or over-the-counter eye drops depending on the patient and his or her medical history."

Although eye allergies can affect anyone, spring can be particularly hard on contact lens wearers. Extended wear time and infrequent lens replacement are two of the main reasons contact lens wearers face more prevalent symptoms during this season. Dr. Knueppel recommends that contact lens wearers consider the following to make the spring season more comfortable:

- Reduce contact lens wearing time, whenever possible.
- Speak with your optometrist about changing your lens cleaning method or the option of wearing daily disposable contact lenses.
- Use eye drops as prescribed by your eye doctor.

While eye allergies can be a nuisance, affecting job performance as well as leisure and sporting activities, symptoms can be both curtailed and prevented by: avoiding touching or rubbing your eyes, washing your hands often with soap and water, washing bed linens and pillowcases in hot water and detergent to reduce allergens, avoiding the sharing of (and in some cases the wearing of) eye makeup, and by never sharing contact lenses or contact lens cases with someone else.

To find an optometrist in your area, please visit [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).

### **About the Wisconsin Optometric Association**

*The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Over 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*

### **About the American Eye-Q® Survey**

*The seventh annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From May 9 - 16, 2012, using an online methodology, PSB conducted 1,009 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level).*