

## SYMPTOMS, CAUSES, AND TREATMENT FOR DRY EYE

**MADISON, WI** – Grittiness, burning, irritation, redness, itching, tearing; if these symptoms sound familiar, you could be one of the estimated 10 million Americans who suffer from dry eye, according to the American Optometric Association (AOA).

Dry eye is a condition where tears lack sufficient moisture and lubrication, which is necessary to maintain good eye health and clear vision. Tears not only wash away dust, but also soothe the eyes, provide oxygen and nutrients to the cornea, and help defend against eye infections by removing harmful bacteria. This condition has a multitude of causes, but generally stems from the following factors:

- **Age:** As Americans age, eyes naturally become drier. Typically, people older than 65 experience some dry eye symptoms.
- **Gender:** Women are more likely to develop dry eye due to hormonal changes during pregnancy, from using oral contraceptives, and following menopause.
- **Medications:** Decongestants, antihistamines, and antidepressants can reduce tear production and increase the likelihood for dry eye.
- **Medical Conditions:** Health issues associated with arthritis, diabetes, Sjögren's syndrome, and thyroid problems can lead to dry eye symptoms.
- **Environment:** Dry climates and exposure to wind and smoke may trigger dry eye.
- **Eyewear/Surgery:** Contact lenses may cause dry eye or make eyes less comfortable if they are dry, and some eye surgeries may lead to a temporary decrease in tear production.
- **Cosmetics:** When the lid margin is coated with heavy makeup, it can block the openings of the oily glands which help lubricate the eye.

Nutrition plays a big role in health, including vision, and dry eye and nutrition are closely linked. Studies have pointed to a simple and effective treatment for dry eye, eating more of the right fish. Salmon, tuna, herring, mackerel, and other cold-water fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and can help reduce inflammation, enhance tear production, and support the eye's oily outer layer by increasing oil that flows from the glands at the end of the eyelids, called the meibomian glands. If fish doesn't sound appealing, nutritional supplements can be incorporated into a diet to also help ease the symptoms of dry eyes.

Artificial tear drops, ointments, or capsules can be used to help simulate or maintain tear production and guard against future tear loss. The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) recommends consulting your licensed eye doctor to ensure proper diagnoses and treatment and making sure to receive your annual eye exams. To find an optometrist in your area, please visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members>.

### **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. Approximately 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).*