

DRY EYES – AN OFTEN IGNORED AND FREQUENTLY FRUSTRATING EYE CONDITION

“Having dry eyes can be quite frustrating for the person who suffers from them,” according to Dr. Michael N. Mandese, O.D., F.A.A.O., of The Eye Institute for Medicine & Surgery. “Dry eyes can be painful, they can cause blurred vision, they can lead to abrasions and chronic infections, and in general, dry eyes can be a rather difficult condition to live with,” continues Dr. Mandese, the Neuro-Eye Diseases Specialist at The Eye Institute.

“To the surprise of many people, excessive, uncontrolled tearing can also be caused by having dry eyes, as the body attempts to compensate for the lack of a high quality tear film,” adds Dr. Eric R. Straut, Optometric Physician and Low Vision Specialist at The Eye Institute.

“At The Eye Institute, complaints of dry, irritated eyes are taken very seriously. We understand how this condition can diminish one’s quality of life,” states Dr. Mandese.

Diagnosing Dry Eye Syndrome

The first step towards finding a solution to dry eyes is making an accurate diagnosis. This starts with a thorough medical history. “We want to know if you have a history of any chronic diseases, particularly inflammatory conditions, autoimmune disorders, and diseases of the thyroid, endocrine system or cancer, as each of these can affect the ways in which they are treated and how symptoms manifest,” remarks Dr. Straut.

Examples of medical conditions that can lead to dry eyes include lupus, sarcoid rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn’s disease, irritable bowel syndrome, ankylosing spondylitis, pregnancy, thyroid disease, and diabetes. Chemotherapy or radiation treatments can also cause or worsen the symptoms associated with dry eyes and, due to hormonal changes, women are more likely than men to suffer from dry eyes.

“Once a person’s medical history has been fully reviewed, my colleagues and I carefully listen to the patient’s concerns. We frequently hear that people who are avid readers or computer users suffer from dry eye as they blink less frequently when engaged in these activities,” states Dr. Mandese.

“People who are frequently exposed to direct air flow from air conditioning or the wind on an ongoing basis are more likely than others to experience irritation associated with dry eyes,” adds Dr. Straut.

“Once people reach their 40s, it is not uncommon for people to begin to experience redness, dryness and irritation, particularly if they wear contact lenses,” according to Dr. Mandese.

Treating Dry Eyes

Dr. Mandese explains that the successful treatment of dry eyes requires a customized and individual approach to ensure that the dry eye sufferer achieves maximum relief. “We believe in a full body approach to dry eye treatment, including nutritional counseling, the use of certain omega 3, 6, and 9 supplements, careful selection of lubricant tear drops, and in many cases the placement of intracanalicular punctal plugs.” Intracanalicular punctal plugs are a major advancement in the treatment of dry eyes. “They fit much better than previous generations of plugs. Patients find them to be comfortable, in most cases not being able to tell that these plugs are in place, with the exception of the fact that the eye irritation that they previously experienced has been eliminated,” adds Dr. Mandese.

Dr. Mandese & Dr. Straut are currently accepting new patients at their Rockledge, Melbourne and Palm Bay Offices. For more information or to schedule an evaluation, please call (321) 722-4443.



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