

Eye Care

GUIDE





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Understanding Dry Eyes

Tears, while they seem like simple droplets of water and emotion, are made of fatty oils, water, mucus and more than 1,500 proteins, according to the National Eye Institute. Their role is to keep surfaces smooth and protected from environmental elements, but when the body can't produce them naturally, your eyes suffer.

Fortunately, most cases won't lead to long-term damage if treated quickly. However, extreme irritation and discomfort are common symptoms affecting millions of Americans.

WHO IS AT RISK?

While the condition is more common in older people, dry eye can be a sign there is an underlying symptom at the source. If you feel you are suffering from dry eye, it's important to schedule an appointment with your doctor. The American Academy of

Ophthalmology states the issue can be caused by serious diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, blepharitis, and entropion or ectropion.

The academy also reports that the condition can occur in both men and women, but females are more at risk to develop it, especially after menopause.

DIAGNOSIS

Typically, a comprehensive eye examination is required to diagnose a case of dry eye. Your doctor will evaluate the external integrity of the eye and both eyelids and cornea.

An exam plus a patient's medical history, seriousness of symptoms and analyzing general health problems will give your practitioner an understanding on the best strategy for treatment.

TREATMENT

Unfortunately, dry eyes are considered a chronic condition but with different treatments, you can still be comfortable. Here are a few ways your doctor may decide to treat the symptoms, as reported by the American Optometric Association.

- Adding tears – Mild cases can be treated using artificial-tear solutions. Most medication is available over the counter and should be used to supplement natural tear production.

- Conserving tears – More serious cases may require silicone plugs being installed into tear ducts. The goal is to keep lubricants available to service the eye longer.

- Increase tear production – If the problem is due to the inability to create enough tears, a doctor may recommend an eye drop which enhances your body's abilities.

Preparing for a Cornea Transplant

One of the most successful transplantation procedures in America is the replacement of a diseased or damaged cornea. According to the National Eye Institute, about 33,000 Americans get the operation each year.

There are a few reasons a corneal tissue transplant may be necessary. Issues with the eye which make you eligible include: corneal ulcers from infections, changes in vision and a condition called keratoconus which makes your cornea bulge.

If you are one of the thousands of Americans preparing for or pursuing a tissue transplant, here are a few things to expect, as reported by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

BEFORE THE SURGERY

Consultation with an ophthalmologist regarding a transplant will require an intensive look into your medical history, medications and availability of quality cornea tissue. Be honest with your practitioner about the medications you are on as prescriptions like blood thinners before surgery can present serious health risks. In most cases, the transplant is an

outpatient operation, but plan to have a ride to and from the clinic as driving will not be an option.

THE DAY OF SURGERY

Walking into to any operation can be scary, but when you don't know what to expect, anxiety levels may be even higher. A typical corneal transplant consists of these proce-

dures.

- A surgeon will administer eye drops and local anesthesia to make you comfortable during the operation. A device will then be placed over your eye to keep it open.

- Depending on the strategy needed to correct your vision, an expert will repair the damaged area of your cornea with healthy tissue.

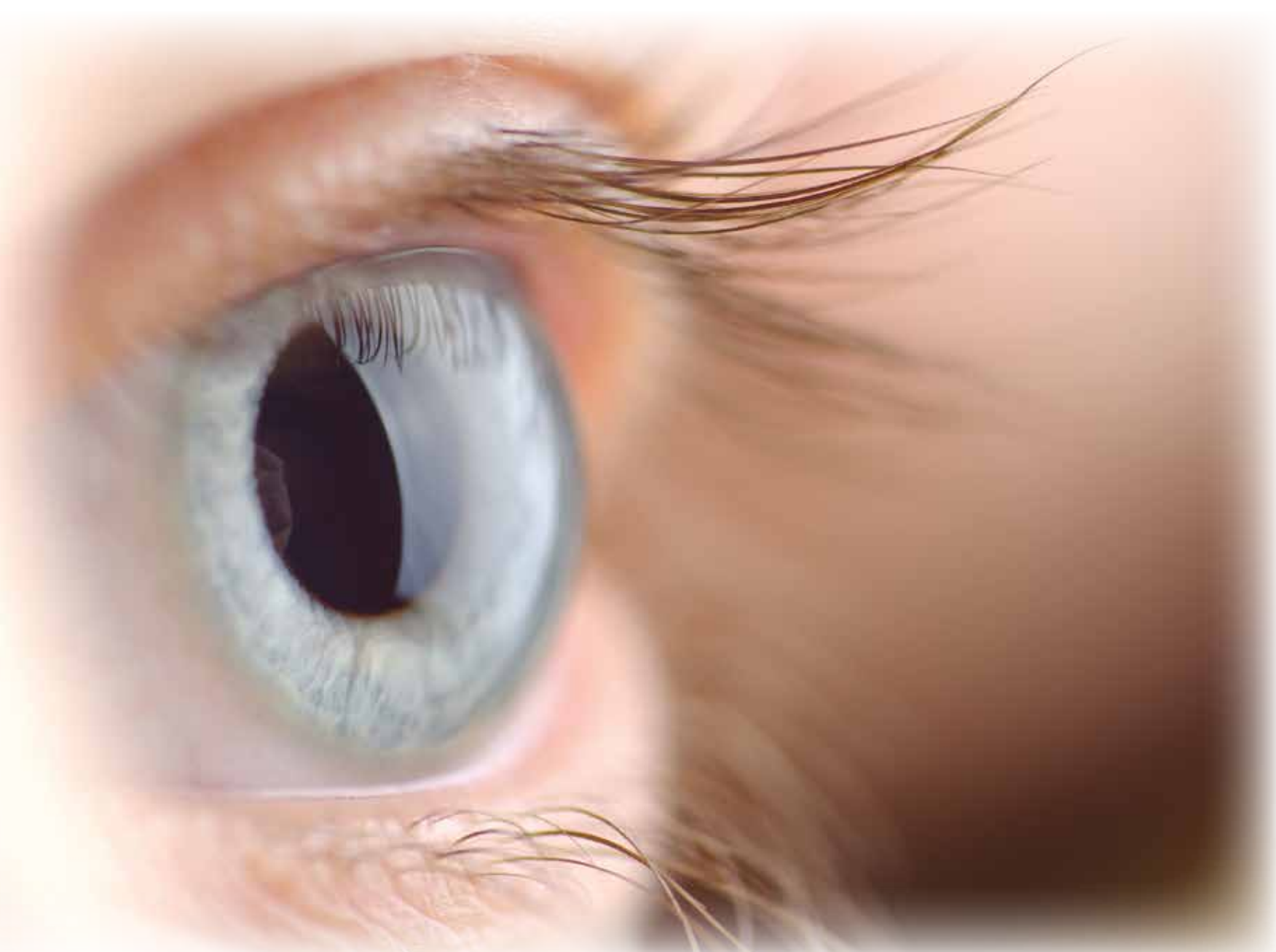
- Once the transplant is complete, a shield will be taped over your eye to keep it safe. After a brief evaluation to ensure you recover from anesthesia, the procedure is complete and you are free to leave.

RECOVERY

The day after a procedure, you ophthalmologist will schedule an appointment to

review your recovery. The stitches used will be analyzed to see if they should be removed. This will largely depend on the overall health of your eye, type of stitches and how quickly you heal.

Some tips from the AAO to recover include using prescribed eye drops, avoid rubbing your eye and to wear glasses for extra protection.



Diagnosing Cataracts

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 21 million Americans have some type of vision problems. One common issue are cataracts; more than half of the country will develop them by their 80th birthday. Those at a heightened risk include people with high blood pressure, diabetes or smokers.

A cataract is clouding of the lens in the eye that affects vision. According to the National Eye Institute, cataracts typically develop as the protein used to keep lenses clear tends to clump together as we get older. Since there are so many behaviors that may accelerate the condition, regular eye tests are crucial to protecting your vision.

SYMPTOMS OF A CATARACT

There are many symptoms those with cataracts may notice. Here are a few common issues you may experience, as reported by the NEI.

- Cloudy or blurry vision.



- Lights from vehicles, lamps or the sun may appear too bright and create a halo around sources.

- Fading colors or double vision in a single eye.

If you have these symptoms or you have other concerns regarding your vision, an appointment with an eye-care professional will get you on the right path to a solution.

DETECTION

To discover if you are suffering from a cataract, there are a few eye exams your professional may administer. A common way a doctor will determine your vision levels is by using a chart you are likely familiar with. It is very useful in revealing how well you can see from various distances.

Another efficient way to

discover a cataract is with a dilated eye exam. It typically includes a professional using eye drops to widen your pupils and use a special magnifying lens to perform an examination of important vision components like the retina and optic nerve. Some eye doctors will choose a procedure called a tonometry. This is performed by using an instrument to measure the

pressure inside your eyes.

Whichever strategy your ophthalmologist chooses to analyze your risks, be sure to address any concerns you may have before the exam.

The National Eye Institute reports that about 90 percent of people who require an operation enjoy better vision afterward. It usually lasts less than an hour and is nearly painless.