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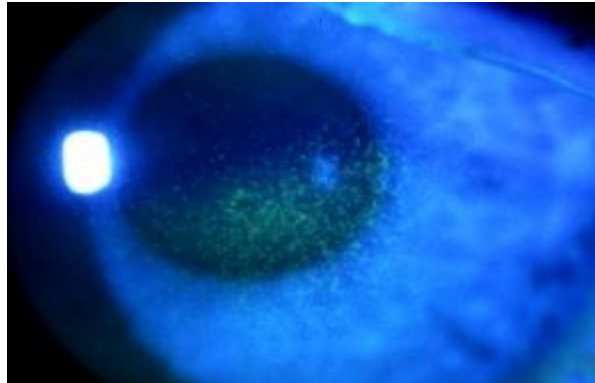
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Dry Eyes

Patient Information:

The tear film that covers the surface of the eye is made up of several components, secreted by glands in the eyelids and around the eye. Its function is to keep the surface wet, preventing damage and to inhibit the growth of bacteria. Deficiency in any one of the components will lead to dry eyes. There are many causes, the commonest being part of the aging process resulting in poorer quality tears being produced.

Photograph of cornea in a case of dry eye syndrome.



Signs and Symptoms

- Gritty, scratchy or feeling of something in the eye
- Itching
- Burning
- Discomfort or pain
- Usually the eye is not red

Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is intended as a useful aid to general practitioners, optometrists and patients. It is impossible to diagnose and treat patients adequately without a thorough eye examination by a qualified ophthalmologist, optometrist or your general practitioner. Hopefully the information will be of use prior to and following a consultation which it supplements and does not replace.

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Treatment

Consists of artificial tear drops to use during the day and ointment to use last thing at night. Different types of artificial tear drops can be bought over the counter at a chemist without a prescription which are less expensive than a prescription charge.

You will be told to use the drops quite often at first then the frequency may gradually be decreased. You may use the drops as frequently as you like without risk of side-effects.

As the drops are used to relieve the symptoms and are not a cure for the condition, you will probably need to use them for a long time. It will also help to avoid situations which make your symptoms worse - for example:

- Smoky environments
- Very warm central heating
- Air-conditioning
- Prolonged contact lens use