

# DRY EYES



## Normal action of tears.

Normally our eyes are kept moist by a film of tears that coats the surface of the eye. The tears help to keep our eyes clean and protect them against infection.

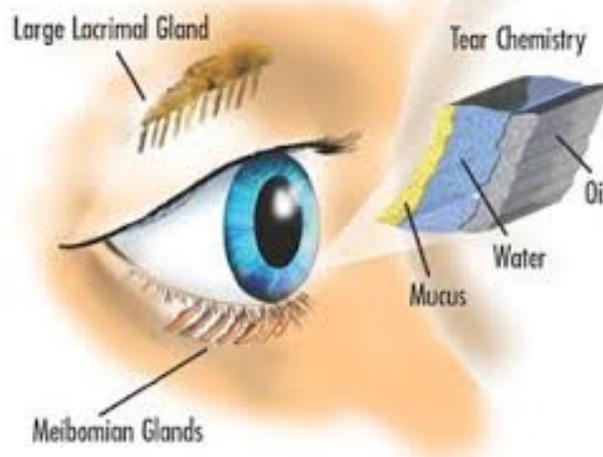
This film is made up of three main components.

**Water** from the main lacrimal gland,

**Oil** from tiny meibomian glands in the the eyelids

**Mucus** from goblet cells in the conjunctiva.

The action of **blinking** spreads the tears over the surface of the eye.



## Dry Eye Syndrome

is a very common condition caused by either a **reduced production** of tears or a **disturbance in the quality** of the tear film.

This leads to the tear film breaking up and leaving tiny **dry patches** and **microscopic erosions** on the surface of the eye causing **redness, grittiness, burning and itching**.

The irritation of dry eyes may actually cause **excessive tearing**, so sometimes watery eyes can actually be a symptom of dry eye syndrome.

# Causes of Dry Eye

The most common cause is the failure of the lacrimal and accessory glands to produce enough tears.

Other factors are:

- Age-related changes in the eye. Most often seen in people over the age of 50
- Women more often affected than men.
- Environmental factors such as dry dusty conditions, wind, heating, air conditioning.
- Concentration on reading, driving, watching television or a computer screen reduces your blink rate and can trigger dryness.
- Diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, rosacea, lupus and Parkinson's disease.

# Treatment

- The main treatment for dry eyes the use of **artificial tear eyedrops**.  
These can be used as often as necessary through the day to keep the eye comfortable.
- **Ointments** or **gels** may be needed to use before bed at night.
- Sometimes, for severely dry eyes **punctual plugs** are inserted to block the tear ducts that drain the tears into the nose.
- **Supplements** such as flax seed oil, omega 3 fatty acids from fish oil and others taken orally can be helpful.
- **Prescription medications** such as cyclosporine eye drops are occasionally used.