

The Quick Summary

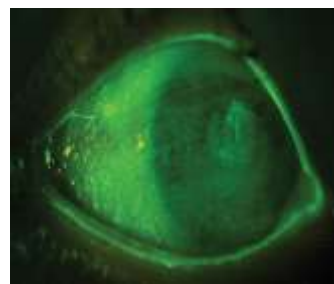
You do not have a huge eye problem that will make you go blind. But, you do have a problem that might take a lot of work at home to fix.

Dry Eye and Blepharitis

Based on your symptoms and your eye exam, Dr. Shalwala thinks that you have dry eye. Dry eye often comes mixed with a condition called blepharitis. Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelid, and this relates to dry eye because the eyelid secretes oils that keep the watery tears from evaporating. An inflamed eyelid does not put out oil normally, which can lead to too much watery tear evaporation.

Symptoms: Dry eye can have a ton of different effects on you. Many of the symptoms can be broken down into those related to blurry vision and those related to irritation.

Blurry vision from dry eye: This kind of blurry vision often changes a lot. The eyes can be blurry but blinking a lot or closing (“resting”) the eyes can help, though sometimes only for a few seconds. Because “resting” the eyes can help, people whose eyes are feeling dry often say their eyes are feeling “tired.” This kind of blurry vision gets worse with reading, watching TV, or using the computer. The blurry vision is also often worse on windy, cold days when the humidity is low. Of course, it can also be bad in the summer if the eyes have a fan on them or the AC is making the humidity low.



Irritation from dry eye: This includes burning, stinging, feeling like something is stuck in the eye, and tearing. Tearing causes a wet eye, and we think it is due to dry eye! It sounds funny, but tearing is the eye’s reflex to the dry surface--like the eye saying, “It’s too dry here; we need wetness!” Unfortunately, those reflex tears don’t do much to help the dryness.

Treatment: The most important thing to know about treatment is that it requires a **lot of hard work at home**. The first steps are warm compresses, artificial tears, and bedtime ointment. This forms the basis of all future treatment of the condition. **Warm compresses** involve holding a washcloth soaked with shower-temperature water over the eyes for **5-10 minutes**. Warm compresses should be done twice daily, in the morning and at bedtime. We like artificial tears at least four times per day and using artificial tears routinely and not only as needed. Dr. Shalwala recommends using preservative-free tears (that almost always come in individual tiny vials rather than bottles) **every time you eat**. **Never use “get the red out” drops**. Ointment to the eyes at bedtime is also helpful; ointment is a better lubricating agent than liquid tears, but it does blur the vision more. Lastly, **drinking water** to avoid dehydration and taking **flaxseed oil or fish oil** (3000 mg/day) are also helpful.

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