

# Dry Eye Disease: Treatment – Part 2

BY DR. THOMAS P. FINLEY, *Optometrist*

**Treatments for dry eyes aim to restore and maintain the normal amount of tears in the eye, minimize dryness and related discomfort, and maintain eye health.**

There are several steps one can take to combat dry eye disease.

1. Have a comprehensive eye examination every year to rule out other eye disease and to make certain your eyes are seeing their best and working well together. If you do a lot of computer work, measure the distance between your eyes and your monitor and tell your eye doctor.
2. Use an over-the-counter artificial tear drop at least four times a day (morning, noon, dinner time, before bed). You can always take more drops if your eyes feel dry and irritated. Use preservative-free drops if taking more than four drops a day.
3. Take a good quality Omega 3 Fatty Acid supplement daily (fish oil & flaxseed oil). The better quality ones do not cause sour stomachs and fish burps.
4. At least twice a day (morning and evening), place hot compresses on you closed eyes for at least 10 minutes. Make the compress as hot as you can tolerate, but remember, if it's too hot to hold, it's too hot for the skin around your eyes. Time yourself. One minute will seem like ten. Commercially available hot compresses are available that maintain the heat for ten minutes. You can also try microwaving uncooked rice in a nylon stocking.
5. Following the hot compresses, perform a thorough cleaning of your eyelashes with a moist wash cloth. If you suffer moderate to severe crusting of your

lashes, you may want to purchase commercially available eye lash wipes to use throughout the day.

6. Our eyes are driest when we sleep because we don't blink. Turn off your ceiling fan when sleeping to prevent further dryness. Wear a sleep mask to help trap in moisture and prevent evaporation



of your tears. Use a more viscous lubricating eye ointment or gel before bedtime to help keep your eyes moist.

7. Reduce eyestrain. Take frequent breaks when performing visually detailed tasks. Computer users often report dry eyes by the end of the day. Blink rate and blink quality decrease during visually detailed tasks such as computer use, which cause the eyes to dry more quickly. Taking visual breaks and looking up from the computer for 20 seconds at something 20 feet away every 20 minutes (20-20-20) can help relieve dry eye symptoms.

8. Reduce glare. If you wear eyeglasses, use a good quality non-glare lens.

9 Work in proper lighting; not too bright or dark

10. Revise your workspace. Place your computer monitor so the top of the screen is on an equal plane with your eyes. This will allow you to blink (and produce tears) more naturally.

11. Give your contact lenses a break. Contact lenses are wonderful, but all of them (even the very latest and greatest) dry out as the day progresses. Wear your glasses occasionally to increase overall comfort, particularly when performing visually detailed work. This will also add to your fashion appeal. If you're planning to wear your lenses all day, try removing and soaking them in solution for 5-10 minutes. This will thoroughly re-hydrate your lenses and give your eyes a brief break.

12. Increase environmental humidity. Running a humidifier at home or at work can decrease the rate of tear evaporation. Clean your air filters at home.

13. Wear good quality sunglasses outdoors to protect against the wind and harmful UV rays.

14. Stop smoking, and avoid tobacco smoke. Cigarette smoke can irritate your eyes. Toxins in tobacco smoke may actually have a negative effect on the production of a good quality tear.

15. Avoid becoming dehydrated by drinking plenty of water (8 to 10 glasses) each day.

There is no cure for dry eye disease so it must be continually managed every day. The above tips will hopefully improve your comfort.



**Dr. Thomas P. Finley** received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Francis University in Pennsylvania, and his Doctorate of Optometry from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Following graduation, he served as an optometry officer in the United States Air Force and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Finley has served as an adjunct clinical professor for three optometry schools, and has been a clinical investigator for two major contact lens companies. He has published several articles in professional and trade journals and local newspapers and has also lectured at educational conferences.

Dr. Finley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Fellow of the Virginia Academy of Optometry, and a member of the American Optometric Association, Virginia Optometric Association, and Northern Virginia Optometric Society. He is an Advisory Board member for TLC Laser Eye Centers.

Locally, Dr. Finley serves as an active member of the Herndon Rotary Club (past president), Chamber of Commerce (past board member), Optimist Club (youth sports' coach), and Knights of Columbus (past board member). He serves on the board of the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic. He was awarded Herndon's "Distinguished Service Award," the Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business of the Year Award," and The Times Newspapers "Best Eye Doctor Award." He has owned his Herndon optometry practice since 1989.

Dr. Finley was recently recognized by the Virginia Optometric Association as Distinguished Optometrist of the Year.

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