

Vision of Health



Artificial Tears Can Help Dry Eye Sufferers

by Dr. Yvonne M. Johnson

(NAPSA)—It may be hard to believe, but tears are vital to your eye health, keeping your eyes bathed in lubricating liquid. Some people don't have sufficient tears and often suffer from a condition known as "Dry Eye Syndrome." This condition is a decline in the quality and quantity of tears bathing the eye.

People who suffer from dry eye often feel as if something gritty or sandy is in their eyes, an annoying feeling that can be quite painful. Your eyes may even sting and burn. It is also not unusual to have excess tearing. This is caused by reflex tears that are stimulated when the front surface of the eye is dry.

Who suffers from dry eye? According to the Schepens Eye Research Institute, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, about 10 million Americans suffer from some form of dry eye. Most cases result from normal aging of glands in the eye: About 75 percent of people over the age of 65 have dry eye. Although it occurs in men and women, dry eye is more common in women who are pregnant or post-menopausal.

Severe dry eye may not seem as detrimental to our vision as glaucoma or cataracts, but if left untreated, it can cause scarring or ulceration of the cornea, and thus loss of vision.

Dry eye is treated with artificial tear products. One, such as the GenTeal® family of artificial tears from Novartis Ophthalmics has formulations to treat mild, moderate and severe dry eye. One of the formulations is preservative-free for people with sensitive eyes, who prefer single-dose units.

Most artificial tear products are sold over the counter. How-



Not A Dry Eye In The House—
Dry eye can be treated with artificial tear products, most of which are sold over the counter.

ever, you should let your doctor know if you are experiencing the gritty and burning symptoms of dry eye.

Q. If I get a bit of sand or another small particle in my eye, what is the best way to remove it?

A. Tearing will wash smaller foreign bodies out of your eye, but sometimes you may need to use a slow, steady stream of water to rinse particles out. You may also pull the upper eyelid out and down, and roll your eye about to trap the particles.

The important thing to remember is to avoid rubbing your eyes so you won't cause an abrasion or scratch of the cornea.

• Dr. Yvonne M. Johnson, an optometrist, is director of Regulatory and Medical Affairs at Novartis Ophthalmics, North America. Have a question? Contact Dr. Johnson at "Ask the Expert" at www.novartisophthalmics.com/us or write to Novartis Ophthalmics, 11695 Johns Creek Parkway, Duluth, GA 30097. Additional information on dry eye can be found at www.genteal.com.