**Dry eyes**

Dry eye syndrome is a condition where the eyes do not make enough tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly. This can lead to the eyes drying out and becoming inflamed. It is a common condition and becomes more common with age, especially in women. Up to a third of people age 65 or older may have dry eye syndrome. It is more common in those with connective tissue disorders, in blepharitis and contact lens wearers.

**Symptoms**

* Feelings of dryness, grittiness, soreness, tired eyes which get worse throughout the day
* Mildly sensitive to light
* Slight blurred vision
* Both eyes are usually affected

**Signs**

* Redness of the eyes
* Stringy discharge or foamy tears
* Spotty (“punctate”) fluorescein staining lower cornea
* May be associated blepharitis

**Eye examination**

* Observe lids, conjunctiva and cornea with white light
* Instil 1 drop of proxymetacaine 0.5% with fluorescein 0.25%
* Observe for corneal staining preferably using a blue light
* Consider Schirmer tear test (wetting of tear test strip in 5 minutes, <5-7mm abnormal)

**Treatment**

* Tear substitutes: mild to moderate cases of dry eye syndrome can usually be successfully treated using over-the-counter artificial tear drops; if a patient has severe symptoms, and needs to use eye drops more than six times a day, or if they wear contact lenses, advise them to use preservative-free eye drops
* Eye ointment can also be used to help lubricate eyes, but it can often cause blurred vision, so it is probably best used only at night
* More severe cases may require specialist medication or lacrimal punctal plugs