

Dry Eye Syndrome

Lots of people complain of dry eye syndrome (DES). Postmenopausal women are **more likely** to suffer from dry eye than men of the same age. But not just hormonal changes may **trigger** the **condition**.

DES is caused by the eyes not producing correct **moisture**. There are quite a few **reasons** this may occur. If not enough **tears** are produced or if their quality is not adequate, the DES **sufferer** may experience **stinging** or **burning**. This might happen because of air conditioning in rooms and on airplanes, or looking at a computer screen for several hours. Other symptoms may include the following: **stringy**

mucous in or around the eyes, **sensitivity** to smoke or wind, eye **fatigue** after short periods of reading, sensitivity to light, **excessive tearing**, and, **blurred vision** often getting worse towards the end of the day. Of course, correct **nutrition** and eye-drops may help, but sometimes you need a PTA ...

Pharmacy customer: Hallo.
PTA: Hallo.

My eyes are really irritated and dry.
Now that is unpleasant! Do you have any other problems?

Yes, I have this mucous-like gunge on my eyes when I wake up in the mornings.
Is it possible that your job involves working at a computer for longer periods?

Yes, certainly. I work at a PC screen all day, every day from Monday to Friday!
And I assume that the air conditioning is running full blast all day too.

Of course! It's so warm at the moment, that I'd melt away if we didn't have air conditioning. Why?
Well, the combination of working at the PC and air conditioning have caused your eyes to become irritated.

Really?

Yes. Most people don't realise that when we work on the PC, we tend not to **blink** as frequently as natural and then the eyes don't get enough moisture. There are other causes of dry eye, but this is apparently the most **widespread**.

What are the other causes?

When people get older, the **glands** around the eye that provide the correct mixture for moisturizing the surface don't function properly. Another cause is this mixture getting out of balance.

Out of balance! How does that happen?

Tears are not just made up of water you see.

Really? I never thought about them before!

Tears are a really complex mixture of water, lipids, proteins and electrolytes. These are produced by various glands situated around the eye.

That's interesting!

That's true! Basically it's the balance between the secretion of oil, water and mucous. Problems with any of the glands producing the mix tend to lead to dry eye.

Do you have any eye drops that are good for treating dry eyes?
Of course! This OTC-product is one of our best sellers, it's alleviates the irritation almost immediately.

Thank you. This is exactly what I need.

Good. You might also look at your nutrition, lack of vitamin A and not enough omega-3 fatty **acids** may also cause dry eye.

I certainly will, thank you.

Bye! ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| more likely | wahrscheinlicher |
| trigger | auslösen |
| condition | Leiden |
| moisture | Feuchtigkeit |
| reasons | Gründe |
| tears | Tränen |
| sufferer | Leidende(r) |
| stinging | stechend |
| burning | brennend |
| stringy | (ugs.) zäh |
| mucous | Schleim |
| sensitivity | Empfindlichkeit |
| fatigue | Ermüdung |
| excessive tearing | übermäßiger Tränenfluss |
| blurred vision | Sehtrübung |
| nutrition | Ernährung |
| irritated | gereizt |
| mucous-like | schleimähnlich |
| gunge (ugs.) | klebriges Zeug |
| blink | blinzeln |
| widespread | verbreitet |
| glands | Drüsen |
| fatty acids | Fettsäuren |