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Dry Eye Treatment

Artificial Tears are the “Band-Aid” of dry eye treatment. There are many brands, but the best are labeled “Preservative Free”, and come packaged in individual-use vials or aerosol sprays. Bottled eye drops contain preservatives, which can irritate the ocular surface, and should be avoided unless specifically recommended by your eye doctor. There are several different viscosities (thickness) of dry eye products, from watery to ointment. The thicker products last longer, but may temporarily impair vision.

Omega-3 fatty acid supplements (fish oil and flaxseed oil) have been shown to help many people with dry eyes, by giving the oil glands the raw material they need to produce oils.

The “cure” for most dry eyes is rehabilitation of the oil glands. This is done by applying a hot, moist compress over the closed lids for at least 10 minutes, followed immediately by a lid massage that exerts a “rolling pin” movement of the finger, gently rolling and pressing toward the lid margin. This forces stagnant oils out of the oil glands. It is important to look up and away from the finger doing the massage to avoid corneal abrasions. Perform 15 to 20 repetitions in each segment being massaged. The hot compress may be made by filling a sandwich size ziplock bag 2/3 full of hot tap water (not boiling water; do not microwave), then wrap in a hot, wet hand towel. Test for tolerance before beginning the 10 minute hot soak. This therapy needs to be repeated at least daily for one to two months, and then every one to two weeks for maintenance.

Some patients with severe dry eyes require additional treatment, possibly including cyclosporine eye drops, oral tetracycline, or plugging the eye's drainage system.

Always check with your eye doctor if you have any questions or problems with any of these therapy measures.