

Teary or dry eyed?

Most of us have experienced these relatively common conditions that become an issue once they persist and affect our daily activities.

By Dr Elaine Chee, Ophthalmologist



Decreased tear elimination, on the other hand, is a result of narrowing of the opening and tear drainage passages. This can be caused by ageing, foreign bodies or tumours, and could also be linked to sinus or nasal problems. A previous history of radiation treatment around the head and neck area and chemotherapy have also been associated with tear drainage issues.

Symptoms: Patients with significantly teary eyes often have increased discharge from the eyes and may have constant red and inflamed eyes.

Treatment: Whether it is due to lax eyelids, incomplete closure of the eyelids, or obstruction of the tear duct system, surgery is usually required. This condition can lead to serious infections and permanent scarring if left untreated.

Dry eyes

This condition is caused by either insufficient tear production or excess evaporation of the tears. It is increasingly common and tends to worsen with age.

Insufficient tear production may be caused by age-related changes in the tear gland, certain medications such as anti-histamines, high blood pressure medication and painkillers. Dry eyes have also been found to be linked with menopause. Reduced tear production can also be caused by certain viral infections, LASIK surgery and radiation treatment.

Dry eyes due to excessive evaporation can result from conditions such as abnormal oil production at the eyelid margin, excessive exposure of the eye surface due to reduced blinking, incomplete closure of the eye due to stroke or thyroid eye disease, and diseases or surgeries that damage the conjunctiva (white part of the eye). High altitudes, dryness (especially in air-conditioned places) or extreme heat can also accelerate tear loss and worsen symptoms.

Symptoms: General discomfort in the eyes, a sandy or gritty sensation, tiredness, intermittent blurring of vision and occasional tearing.

Treatment: Mild cases are treated with artificial tears and gels, while serious conditions require daily lid scrubs to reduce bacteria. In severe cases, occlusion is performed to reduce tear drainage and increase the amount of tears in the eye. Nutritional supplements such as Omega-3 have also been used to improve the situation. If left untreated in severe cases, it can lead to recurrent inflammation and eventual scarring of the eyes.



.....
Dr Elaine Chee
Eye & Retina Surgeons
1 Orchard Boulevard
#13-03 Camden Medical Centre
Singapore 248649
Tel: 6738 2000
www.eyeretinasurgeons.com

Tears are produced by the tear gland, which is underneath the upper outer part of the eyelid. It forms a film over the eye, as well as a tear lake in the lower part of the eyelid. When you blink, the eyelid spreads the tears and pushes the tears towards the inner corner of the eyelids towards the nose via the tear ducts. This is the reason why we get a runny nose when we cry. The tear drainage system drains the tears away passively and via the blinking action of the eyelids.

Tears consist of three layers, namely an outer oily layer, a middle layer of water, electrolytes and proteins, and an inner mucin layer. The tear layers have a variety of important different functions: they maintain a smooth surface for clear vision, lubricate to help in blinking, and protect the eye against infection.

Teary eyes

This is caused by excessive production or decreased elimination of tears through the tear drainage system.

Excessive production of tears is usually caused by foreign bodies, inflammation or infections of the eyes, or malposition and laxity of the eyelid resulting in the eyelid margin either turning inward or outward.