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## What You Should Know About Dry Eyes

How age-related changes affect your eyes, and where to find relief  
by Bausch + Lomb (Paid Content)





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When your eyes are uncomfortable, they can be difficult to ignore. You may attribute dry, irritated eyes to stress, lack of sleep, or maybe allergies – and “dry eyes” may not be your first thought if your eyes are tearing all the time. Especially as we age, many of us produce plenty of tears, but we experience dry eye symptoms because the quality of our tears has changed. Understanding how our tears change with age can help us find relief.

### Why it happens as you age

A row of oil-secreting glands, called meibomian glands, lines each of our eyelids, top and bottom. These meibomian glands secrete a mix of lipids that help to hold the tears onto the surface of our eyes. Without these lipids, our tears would evaporate too quickly, preventing the tears from doing their job of nourishing and protecting the eye. But the meibomian glands can lose function over time. Indeed, between the ages of 20 and 50, the number of active meibomian glands have been shown to decrease by 50%.<sup>1</sup> Extensive use of digital devices and computers during our careers and leisure time may also be a contributing factor.

Arthur B. Epstein, OD, FAOD is the co-founder of the Dry Eye Center of Arizona in Phoenix. He says that as we age, it's more difficult for tears to lubricate our eyes.



DR. ARTHUR B. EPSTEIN

<sup>1</sup>This can lead to meibomian gland dysfunction (MGD) and a thinning of the protective tear lipid layer. As the tears evaporate too quickly between blinks, you may feel symptoms such as dry eyes, stinging, and burning. The symptoms of this evaporative dry eye may be similar to what you would experience if your eyes were not producing enough tears, but the cause is different. This difference means that the symptoms should be managed in a way that addresses the aging eye's specific needs.<sup>2</sup>




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### Relief can be found in a drop

Among people with dry eye symptoms, a majority (86%, according to one study)<sup>3</sup> have MGD.<sup>2</sup> But people commonly use over-the-counter eye drops to relieve their symptoms.

<sup>1</sup>I find that few reach for an eye drop specific to their needs," adds Dr. Epstein. "Because MGD results in loss of the protective oils in the tear film, oil-based eye drops can be an appropriate choice to help restore that disrupted lipid layer. Oil-based eye drops, such as Soothe<sup>XP</sup> XP lubricant eye drops, help restore the lipid layer to protect against tear evaporation and seal in moisture on the surface of the eye. Indeed, Soothe<sup>XP</sup> XP eye drops were shown to increase the lipid layer by 56% when compared to non-oil-based eye drops."<sup>3</sup>




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Thankfully, we have access to over the counter lipid-based eye drops, but remember to talk to your doctor about eye dryness regardless. When you visit your eye doctor for your annual exam, tell them about any dry eye symptoms you may be experiencing. Talk to them about eye drops you've tried and how they've impacted your symptoms. The eye doctor may assess your meibomian glands and recommend other measures, such as warm compresses, blinking exercises, or in-office treatments. Your eye doctor will also be able to refine your plan, guiding you in selecting an appropriate eye drop.


Your tears have been protecting your eyes for your whole life, and though your eyes may be aging, it doesn't have to feel like it. Just as you may not eat the same foods or enjoy the same hobbies as you did when you were younger, your eye dryness symptoms should be treated differently. Supplementing your tears in a way that will restore the lipid layer can be a proactive way to address age-related changes and enjoy your daily activities with less discomfort.

**Click here to save \$4.00 on your purchase of Soothe<sup>®</sup> XP Eye Drops**

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Source:  
<sup>1</sup> Ding J, Sullivan DA. Aging and dry eye disease. *Exp Gerontol.* 2012;47(7):483-490.  
<sup>2</sup> Lemp MA, Crews LA, Bion AJ, Fouks GN, Sullivan BD. Distribution of aqueous-deficient and evaporative dry eye in a clinic-based patient cohort: a retrospective study. *Cornea.* 2012;31:472-478.  
<sup>3</sup> Fogt JS, Kowalaki MJ, King-Smith PE, et al. Tear lipid layer thickness with eye drops in meibomian gland dysfunction. *Clin Oculthalmol.* 2016;10:2232-2243.

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