

How to Fight Dry, Itchy Eyes This Winter



TUESDAY, Dec. 26, 2017 – Add dry eyes to the health woes of winter.

“On average, the humidity drops in the winter with the colder weather [and] most people turn on the heat in their homes or offices to combat the cold,” said Dr. Marissa Locy, who’s with the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s department of ophthalmology.

“What you end up having is lower humidity outside, and even lower humidity inside – making for warm, dry conditions where moisture can evaporate from the eye faster than normal,” she explained in a university news release.

That can leave your eyes feeling dry, gritty, stuck and irritated.

What to do?

Locy suggests several steps to protect your eyes from becoming dry:

- Use a humidifier to help restore humidity to the air and moisture to the eyes.
- Drink lots of fluids to keep your body hydrated and maintain moisture in your eyes.
- Protect your eyes from extreme cold and wind. That can include eye protection or a hat with a visor.

- Don't let heat blow directly onto your face. Doing so can dry up moisture in your eyes. Turn your car vents toward your lower body to avoid this problem.

During cold weather, your eyes can dry out even more if you wear contacts. So, Locy said, be sure you always wear clean contacts to reduce itching and possible infection.

Dry eye can sometimes progress to dry eye disease. See your doctor if you're concerned.

Dry eye cannot be cured, Locy said, but symptoms can be relieved by using eye drops, ointments or medication, or by plugging some tear ducts to slow the drainage of tears from the eye's surface.

More information

The U.S. National Eye Institute has more on dry eye.



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