

focus on eye health

If you watch just one hour of TV these days, you might think that everyone suffers from dry eye. Commercials and other ads for prescription and over-the-counter solutions are everywhere. I used to roll my eyes when a certain commercial for lubricating eye drops came on the TV. All joking aside, I didn't know then what dry eye meant exactly—or just how pervasive it is.

Estimates show that dry eye affects roughly 30 million Americans, and many experts believe the real number is much higher because the condition is under reported. In moderate to severe cases, quality of life can also be affected. In one study, researchers found that unstable angina (chest pain caused by heart disease) and dry eye rated similarly in terms of negative impact on quality of life.

A recent study sheds light on a potential cure for dry eye—healthy fats. According to research published in an online version of the journal *Cornea*, a daily supplement (HydroEye) with a blend of omega fatty acids (GLA, EPA, and DHA) improved irritation associated with dry eye and stopped the progression of inflammation characteristic of moderate to severe dry eye in six months. Symptoms among people in the placebo group actually worsened in the same six-month period.

There are numerous supplements at health food stores that contain GLA, EPA, and DHA; some are specifically marketed for dry eye (such as HydroEye), and others are simply labeled as essential fatty acid products. Sea buckthorn berry is naturally rich in omega-3s, -6s, -7s, and -9s, which makes it an ideal remedy for dry eye. In fact, several companies are now promoting sea buckthorn for this very use.

As you'll read in "The Eyes Have It" and "Head-to-Toe Antioxidant Guide" on p. 18 and p. 30, nutrition and key antioxidant supplements play an important role in all aspects of eye health, including the prevention of macular degeneration and other eye diseases.

After learning more about dry eye and other vision-related problems, I'm no longer rolling my eyes. I'm grateful for the precious gift of sight and information on how to protect it.

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