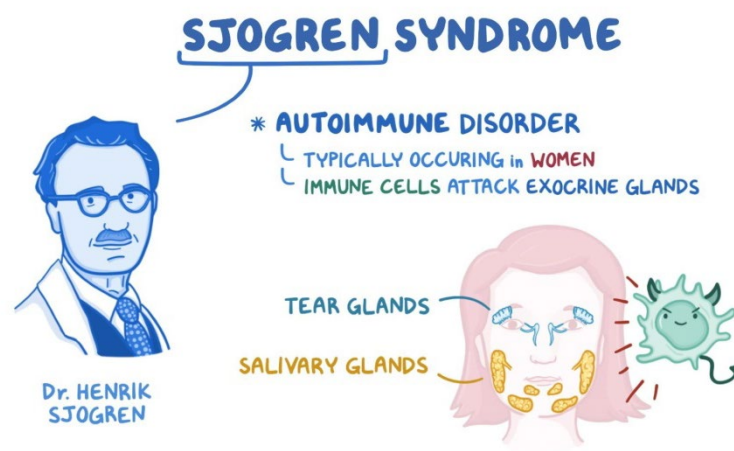


Sjogren Syndrome

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Sjogren Syndrome (SS) is an immune system disorder that commonly affects your eyes. Sjogren causes the immune system to attack the tear glands, stopping the production of healthy tear film and causing dry eyes. Your immune system works to identify foreign bacteria or viruses and attack them to keep you healthy. With SS the immune system attacks the glands that produce tears and saliva making they struggle to work properly. While there is no specific cause or triggers for SS it is said that genetics, environmental factors and hormonal changes may be related.



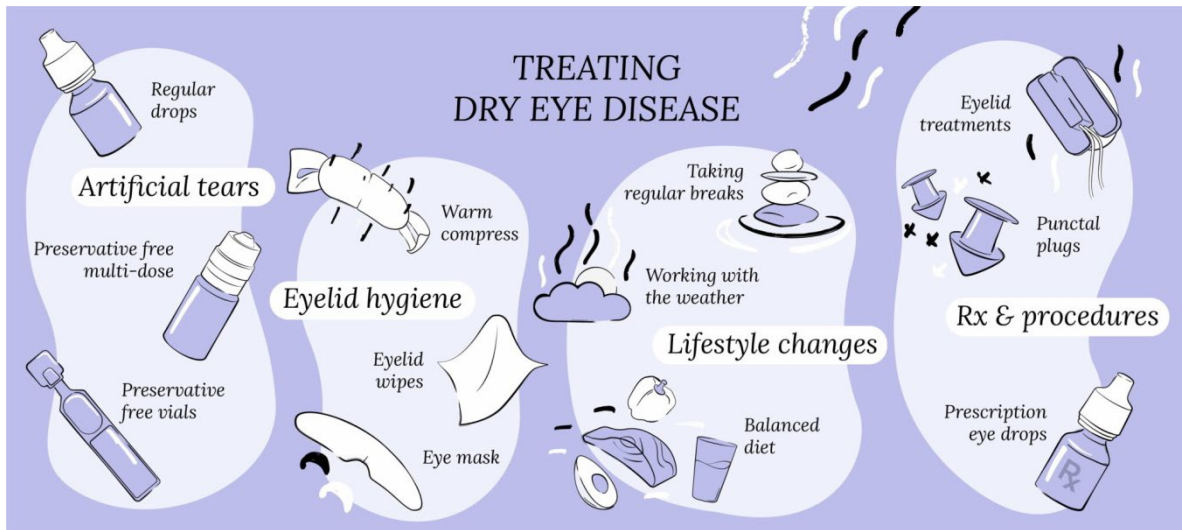
The main symptoms of Sjogren include:

- Dry eyes- Itchy, irritated, burning or gritty feeling
- Dry mouth- difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Dry and itchy skin- rashes
- Fatigue
- Bowel irritation
- Swelling and tenderness of glands

The earlier you are diagnosed the better in order to prevent future complications. Due to the symptoms being common with other conditions and medication side effects, it can be tricky to diagnose it. SS is typically tested and diagnosed by a Rheumatologist (a specialist that treats joint, muscle and bone conditions). The first test that is used is a Schirmer's test which is when a blotting strip is held to the bottom eyelid the measure the amount of tear production present. Then a full dry eye assessment is conducted by an optometrist, using special dyes to assess the surface of the eye and tear film. A biopsy is then taken from a salivary gland, typically the lip and tested. Blood tests are also taken to assess the immune system cells and to check liver and kidney health.

There is no cure of Sjogren but it manageable with the following aides

- Artificial tears and lubricating ointments for eyes
- Artificial saliva
- Moisturiser for skin
- Anti-inflammatories
- Immunosuppresses to control the immune system
- Surgery- there is a minor procedure to seal the tear ducts that drain tears that can relieve dry eyes. Collagen or silicone plugs are used.



You can also take the following measures of self-management

- Avoid dry environments
- Wearing protective glasses outside
- Regularly drinking water
- Sucking on ice cubes
- Exercise regularly
- Use warm water for showers (not hot)

If these symptoms are similar to what you may be experiencing and want to talk more about Sjogren's Syndrome, contact your GP or optometrist today. We at Buck and Todd Optometrist take the time to fully investigate all of your concerns and talk with you about the next steps to relieve and manage your discomfort.