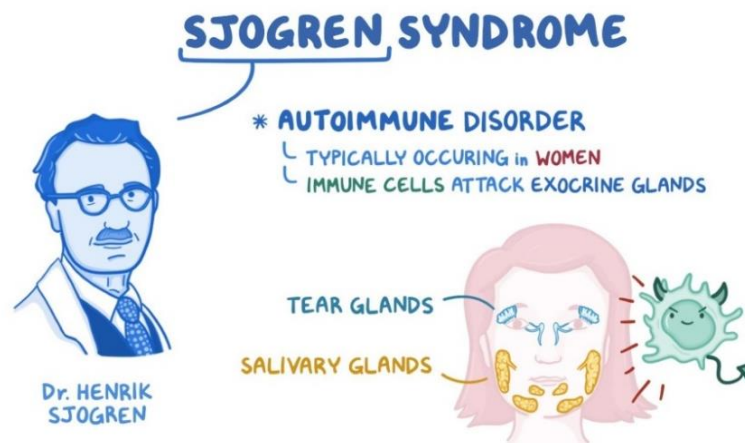


## Sjögren's Syndrome

Sjögren's syndrome is an autoimmune disorder, where the immune system attacks the body's own healthy cells. It typically attacks the glands that normally produce tears, saliva and sweat. Other parts of the body may also be affected. Sjögren's disrupts the production of a healthy tear film and resulting in dry eyes. Normally, the immune system identifies and attacks foreign bacteria or viruses to keep you healthy. However, in Sjögren's syndrome the immune system mistakenly targets the glands responsible for producing tears and saliva, impairing their function.

The cause of Sjögren's syndrome is unknown. It is more common in women and in people over 40 who have rheumatic disease, like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus. Genetic, environmental and hormonal factors may play a role in its development.



### 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 in face and neck.

### Some people with Sjogren's syndrome also suffer:

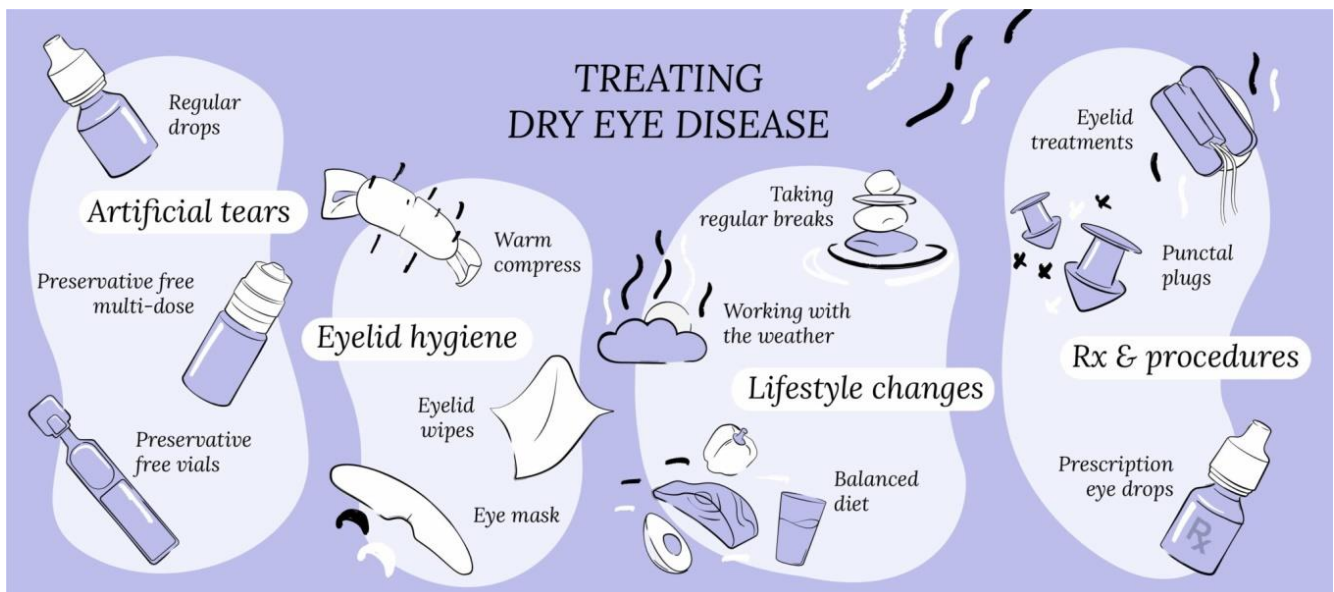
- Joint pain, swelling and stiffness.
- Dry skin or skin rash.
- Vaginal dryness.
- Persistent dry cough.
- Prolonged fatigue.

Diagnosing Sjögren's syndrome can be challenging. We evaluate the tear production using a Schirmer's test, where a blotting strip is placed under the lower eyelid to measure tear production. Following this we conduct a comprehensive dry eye assessment using special dyes to evaluate the surface of the eye and tear film.

Frequently associated with tooth and gum disease a biopsy from a salivary gland, imaging of the salivary glands, and blood tests, checking for antibodies, are conducted by your doctor or rheumatologist to assess immune system cells and check the health of the liver and kidneys.

## There is no cure for Sjögren, but dry eye issues can be managed with the following:

- Artificial tears and lubricating ointments for eyes.
- Anti-inflammatory drops: both steroidal and non-steroidal.
- Immunosuppressants drops (Ciclosporin) to reduce the immune system response.
- Punctal plugs (Collagen or silicone) to seal the tear drainage.
- Surgery to seal the tear drainage.
- Scleral contact lenses.
- High surface water content soft contact lenses.
- Eyelid hygiene.
- Tranquileyes™ nighttime goggles.



You can also do the following for self-management:

- Avoid dry environments.
- Wearing protective glasses outside.
- Regularly drinking water.
- Sucking on ice cubes.
- Chew sugar free gum.
- Exercise regularly.
- Use warm water for showers (not hot).
- Increase indoor humidity.
- Use preservative-free moisturiser for skin.
- Avoid drying conditions such as drafts from heaters and air conditioners.
- Use a saline spray for a dry nose.
- Avoid exposure to dusty or windy weather

If these symptoms sound familiar and you want to discuss Sjögren's syndrome further, contact your us or your GP today. At Buck and Todd Optometrists, we take the time to thoroughly investigate all your concerns and discuss the next steps to relieve and manage your discomfort. Your eye health is our priority, and we are committed to providing you with the care and attention you need.