



DENNY EYE & LASER CENTER

August 21, 2020

Are your eyes more irritated than usual this week? As wildfires spread across Northern California, air quality warnings have been issued throughout the Bay Area. Despite their best efforts, many people are finding that the red skies are matched by equally red eyes.

Smoke from wildfires can travel hundreds of miles to cause respiratory and eye symptoms far from the epicenter of the blaze. While anyone can be affected,

those with pre-existing ocular surface disease like dry eye, blepharitis, and allergic conjunctivitis, are especially vulnerable.

Symptoms of smoke-related eye disease include redness, burning sensation, and increased tearing. You may find that your existing dry eye treatment regimen is having a hard time keeping up with these new irritants.

Smoke-related eye symptoms

Dryness

Burning

Tearing

Redness

Dry Eye

You may have noticed a thin layer of ash collecting on your car windshield this week. Imagine the same debris accumulating on the surface of your eye throughout the day. To make matters worse, these smoke particles disrupt your natural tear film, which can lead to an irregular surface, blurred vision, and faster tear evaporation, further exacerbating the problem.

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Just as you would use your wipers to clear the windshield, you may need to irrigate the surface of the eye using lubricating eye drops. When choosing a formulation of artificial tears, it's important to consider the frequency you will be using them. Smoke exposure increases the need for aggressive lubrication, but traditional artificial tears may contain toxic additives that can cumulatively damage the ocular surface. Preservative-free artificial tears, on the other hand, can be used as frequently as every hour with minimal risk.

How can I tell if my artificial tears are preservative-free?

Because they don't contain preservatives to maintain long-term sterility, preservative-free artificial tears are sold and stored in individual vials that can be discarded at the end of each day. Look for "preservative free" on the label, or call our office if you would like to pick up a box or have them shipped to you.

RED EYE

While most of us are socially distancing, people are still participating in video conference calls on a regular basis. You might be tempted to use an over-the-counter drop to reduce your red eye symptoms, but some formulations can lead to "rebound" redness – a phenomenon where the symptoms can come back worse than they started once the medication wears off.



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A new drop called Lumify is an alternative that offers red eye reduction with a lower risk of rebound symptoms. Lumify is available over the counter, or through our office. You may continue to use your preservative free artificial tears while using Lumify.

STAY SAFE

The best treatment is prevention. Stay indoors whenever possible. Close windows. Use an air filter. Consider wearing goggles if your eye symptoms are severe. Use your contact lenses less until air quality improves. For additional information regarding wildfire safety, visit the [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) website.

Denny Eye & Laser Center remains open for scheduled and urgent visits, with strict sanitary protocols in place for COVID-19. Please stay home if you have any flu-like symptoms or recent contact with sick persons, and wear a mask during your visit. Don't hesitate to call us with any questions at 415-567-8200.

Contact Us

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