

# Eye allergies

## Questions

### What are eye allergies?

Eye allergies are the response sensitive eyes have when they come in contact with an irritant or a foreign allergen. Allergies can affect both children and adults.

### What causes eye allergies?

Common allergic substances include pollens as well as dust mites and animal hair. Seasonal allergies, known as hayfever, are the most common cause of eye allergies and affect from eight to 10 per cent of people. Common causes of seasonal allergies include grass and tree pollens. When the allergen comes in contact with the eye, the body automatically produces a substance called histamine, which results in allergic symptoms.

### What are the symptoms of eye allergies?

Common symptoms include:

- > Red eyes
- > Watery eyes
- > Sore eyes
- > Itchy eyes
- > Gritty eyes
- > Sandy eyes

Children in particular will often rub their eyes or blink forcefully and repeatedly to relieve the itch symptoms. These allergy symptoms can present in one or both eyes although it is common for environmental allergens such as pollens and dust mites to affect both eyes.



### Who should I see for my eye allergies?

People experiencing symptoms related to eye allergies should see their optometrist, who will be able to assess and diagnose any itch, discomfort or irritation and provide appropriate treatment to relieve it.

### How can I manage my eye allergies?

There are a number of methods and products to use to treat and manage symptoms of eye allergies. These include:

- > Placing a facecloth soaked in cold water over closed eyelids
- > Using artificial tears or tear lubricants to provide temporary relief
- > Using antihistamine eye drops
- > Using mast cell stabiliser eye drops
- > Using oral over-the-counter antihistamine medications for severe cases

It is not recommended that you diagnose and treat yourself. Speak to your local optometrist about the best product to use to manage your eye allergies.

## Prevention

### How can I prevent eye allergies?

Allergy prevention often starts with identifying the allergen. Eye allergies can be prevented by avoiding contact with the irritants that cause the symptoms. For example, avoid areas where the air quality is poor or pollen levels are high.

Eye drops and oral medications are also available to use as preventative therapy in consultation with your optometrist.

**For more information and help to select the treatments that meet all your eye care and lifestyle needs, ask your optometrist or visit [goodvisionforlife.com.au](http://goodvisionforlife.com.au)**

## Your optometrist