

## Help for Your Eyes This Allergy Season

Itchy, watery and swollen eyes are a sign of spring for many who suffer from seasonal allergies. But they do not have to be. OCB Allergy and Dry Eye expert Jason Rothman, MD, recommends staying one step ahead of blooming trees, grass and weeds with the following tips:

**Identify the allergen so you know what you need to avoid.** In New England this time of year, pollen is the most common type of allergen. But, you may also suffer from chronic perennial allergies which come from indoor allergens such as dust, pet dander or household chemicals.

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### Is It Dry Eye or Allergies?

It may be difficult to know if you are suffering from eye allergies, dry eye or both. In fact, treating dry eye inappropriately with allergy medication is a common mistake. The biggest difference lies in the itching. Dry eye usually does not cause itchy eyes. Allergies on the other hand, usually cause itchy, watery eyes with a stringy mucus discharge. Blurry vision, burning, grittiness in your eyes are symptoms associated with dry eye. Only your eye doctor can accurately diagnose dry eye. If you are experiencing symptoms of dry eye or you cannot control your allergy symptoms, schedule an appointment with your OCB ophthalmologist or optometrist today.



*Jason Rothman, MD is a Cornea Specialist who cares for patients with allergies and dry eye.*



*The Center for Eye Research and Education is a non-profit foundation led by OCB physicians that supports projects throughout the world aimed at preserving vision for those in need. To donate, go to: [cere-foundation.org](http://cere-foundation.org)*



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# Advances in Caring for Dry Eye

New technologies designed to improve care for patients with dry eye are now available at Ophthalmic Consultants of Boston.

Dry eye occurs when your eyes produce poor quality tears or do not produce enough tears, which can lead to symptoms of burning, grittiness and blurry vision that can be debilitating. The cause of dry eye in many cases is inflammation of the eye's oil producing glands, called the meibomian glands. Oils produced by meibomian glands seal in and prevent evaporation of your tear film.

If your dry eye is caused by problems with these glands, your OCB eye doctor may recommend a new therapeutic procedure, called LipiFlow. Performed in the doctor's office, this procedure delivers warm pulsations to the eyelids, opening up the oil glands and helping them to secrete oils normally.

*LipiFlow uses thermal pulsating heat to remove blockages in the meibomian glands.*

New diagnostic tools have become available that provide our eye doctors with more precise information making the new treatments more effective.

*"Determining what is causing your dry eye is critical in determining which of many therapies available for dry eye will be most effective for you and yield the best result," says OCB dry eye specialist Jason Rothman, MD. "New diagnostic measures provide us with more information than ever before about the composition of your tears."*

These new tools include a test that measures the level of saltiness in your tears, called tear osmolarity, and inflammatory markers in your tears. As osmolarity in your tears increase, cells on the surface of your eyes become more damaged, causing more irritation. This test enables our doctors to see how severe your dry eye is and determine how it is responding to treatment.

Another new tool, called LipiView, takes a digital image of your tear film and eyelids. This allows doctors to see the health of your oil producing glands, measure the oil layer of your tear film, track how often you blink and track whether your lids close completely when you blink.



OCB has dry eye clinics in many of our practice locations. If you are suffering from symptoms of dry eye, schedule an appointment for an evaluation at an office close to home today.

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**Keep hands away.** This is critical. When you rub your eyes, you bring the allergens that are on your fingers directly to your eyes. In addition, the act of rubbing in itself can release histamines. Histamines are the substances that your eyes produce in response to an allergy that lead to red, swollen, teary eyes.

**Wash allergens away.** When environmental allergens are active, be sure to shower before you go to bed, washing your hair and face, or run a wet brush through your hair. Most people do not realize that they may be sleeping on a pillow swarming with allergens.

**Use drops.** When eye allergies are active, you can try an over the counter artificial tear drop, which will flush away allergens and histamines. Instilling the drops cold may be more comfortable. Over the counter allergy eye drops are also effective. Drops may be started two weeks before allergy season to help stay ahead of symptoms. If you are having only eye symptoms and not systemic allergy symptoms such as a cough and runny nose, use only the allergy eye drops and try to avoid oral anti-histamines, which can dry your eyes.



**Avoid "redness relief" drops.** It is best to avoid drops that advertise getting the redness out of your eyes. Long term use of these can have detrimental effects on your eyes.

**For quick relief.** When symptoms are active, try wrapping a bag of frozen peas in a towel and placing it over your eyes. Cold packs can provide great relief.

**Dry eye and allergies.** Allergy symptoms can make your dry eye worse. If you are suffering from both, treating your eye allergies will in turn help your dry eye symptoms.

If over the counter measures are not helping your condition, schedule an appointment with your OCB eye doctor.



## Community Outreach

Retina Specialist David Reed, MD, recently spoke to the City of Boston Commission on Elder Affairs highlighting new treatments for vision loss in a talk entitled “Ophthalmology-Vision and Macular Degeneration.”

Dr. Reed also participated in a community education series held at Beth Israel Deaconness Hospital in Plymouth, presenting the lecture “Diabetes: How It Can Affect Your Eyes.”

*David Reed, MD specializes in conditions of the Retina, Vitreous and Diabetic Eye Disease.*

## Eyecare America

EyeCare America is a public service program supported by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and co-founded by B. Thomas Hutchinson, MD, a founding partner of Ophthalmic Consultants of Boston. Eyecare America provides eye care to US citizens and legal residents through volunteer ophthalmologists at no cost to those who qualify. To learn more visit [www.aao.org/eyecare-america](http://www.aao.org/eyecare-america).

## Leading Research in the Field of Eyecare

OCB eye doctors are recognized regionally and nationally as experts. Many are actively involved in research that is advancing the medical and surgical care of a wide range of eye conditions. To follow their published research and presentations, visit [www.eyeboston.com](http://www.eyeboston.com) and click on “In the News.”



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