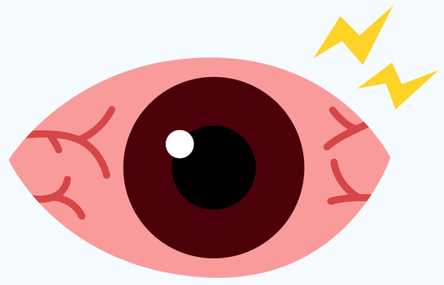
ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

Optometrists: Your Partner in Red (Pink) Eye Care



Optometrists are uniquely and highly trained to identify, diagnose and effectively treat conditions that cause red eyes. In some cases, patients need to be referred for more specialized care.

What is Red or Pink Eye?

“Red Eye” or “Pink Eye” is a term that is given to anything that causes an eye to become red or pink. It is not a diagnosis but rather a sign. It refers to a collection of conditions that can range from minor to sight-threatening, acute to benign and contagious to non-contagious.

What Can Cause a Red Eye?

There are potentially dozens of causes of a red eye. Infectious causes range from bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic. Irritative causes include dry eye, trauma, foreign body, environmental and contact lens-related. Allergic reactions to specific airborne allergens, drops, contact lens cleaning solutions and cosmetics can cause one or both eyes to become red. Inflammation (non-infectious) on the surface or inside of the eye can cause one or both eyes to become red. This inflammation may not have a direct known cause or may be autoimmune related. Some red eyes are caused by medications such as blood thinners or by lifting something that is excessively heavy, or by aggressively sneezing, coughing or vomiting. In rare cases, the cause of a red eye could be a sudden increase in eye pressure or a severe vascular abnormality. For all causes listed, the potential for vision loss can range from minimal to severe and temporary to permanent.

How Are Optometrists Uniquely Qualified to Diagnose Red Eyes?

Optometrists are trained to initially take a detailed case history of a patient’s red eye complaints. All optometrists have access to specialized equipment (slit lamp bio microscopy, tonometry, retinal imaging, tear gland imagery and 2/3 D corneal mapping) that is unique to optometrists and ophthalmologists to accurately diagnose the cause of a red eye.

What Are the Treatments for a Red Eye?

Potential treatments are highly dependent on an accurate diagnosis, which an optometrist can provide. Self-medicating or seeking advice from a health care professional other than an optometrist or ophthalmologist can potentially delay resolution and have lasting effects on vision. In some cases, optometrists may need to refer patients to an ophthalmologist or the family physician for more specific systemic testing.

Book Your Eye Exam