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Swollen eyes, dark circles, red and burning eyes

Everything you need to know about possible causes and how to keep them at bay

Ever get swollen eyes, dark circles, and red or burning eyes? These are uncomfortable symptoms with many possible causes. BETTER VISION explains: What causes swollen eyes, dark circles, and red and burning eyes – and how can you prevent it all?

Too little sleep, the wrong glasses, allergies, eye infections or too much time spent working at a screen – there are many things that can irritate our sensitive eyes. So it's hardly surprising that complaints such as swollen eyes, dark circles, or red or burning eyes are very commonplace. But there are effective ways of preventing them. We'll tell you all about how.

[Swollen eyes](#)[Dark circles under eyes](#)[Red or sore eyes](#)[Burning eyes](#)

Swollen eyes

Symptoms of swollen eyes:

The eyes and eyelids become fat and swollen, and occasionally red and sensitive to pressure. There's frequent itching, watering and a burning sensation. This generally affects both eyes; it's rare for symptoms to only affect one eye.





Causes of swollen eyes:

You may already be aware of some of the more common causes of swollen eyes – a morning glance in the mirror is enough to remind you about what happened last night: too little sleep, stale air (e.g. caused when it's too warm or stuffy) or even crying too many crocodile tears during a romantic film all put a great strain on our eyes and cause them to swell. That's because the skin around our eyes is much thinner than that which covers the rest of our face. This means signs of strain and fatigue are much more visible around the eyes. But swollen eyes may also be inherited or a result of the aging process – and there are many other causes besides:

- If your dinner is very salty or contains a lot of protein, you may have swollen eyes the next morning. This is exacerbated if you spend a long time sleeping horizontally, which compromises the flow of lymphatic fluid in the eye area. This means the fluid will collect during the night and lead to swelling.
- [> Allergies](#) (normally related to pollen, dust or animal hair) and an intolerance of certain medications or foods can also cause swollen eyes.
- Acute neurodermatitis can lead to swollen, sore and/or dry eyes.
- What's more, certain eye infections can cause swelling, such as [> conjunctivitis](#) or styes.
- Eye problems may also indicate another disease. For example, swollen eyes can also be triggered by kidney or heart disease, an underactive thyroid or high blood pressure. The eyes often swell when we catch a cold, particularly if the sinuses are also affected.
- Dehydration can also lead to swollen eyes.
- [> Dry eyes](#), for instance due to wearing contacts for a long time, being exposed to heated air or spending hours working at a screen can also lead to swollen eyes.
- Certain [> medications](#) dry out the eyes and thus lead to swelling.
- External influences like a knock or impact can also cause swelling.
- When the hormone oestrogen is produced during menstruation, many women notice water deposits around the eyelids.

How to get rid of swollen eyes:

A range of treatments are available depending on what's causing the swelling. As a rule, if the symptoms don't go away by themselves it's advisable to consult an eye doctor to determine what's causing them. The same applies for recurring symptoms, or if they come on suddenly and don't disappear soon afterwards.

There are a number of simple, tried-and-tested home remedies that can provide fast relief for very swollen eyes. As with most types of swelling, the cold can work wonders. You could try placing a cold teabag on the swollen eyelids (green tea causes swelling to go down), or why not treat your eyes to a cooling cucumber mask?

Please note: Some people may have an allergic reaction to a flavoured black teabag. If this is the case, remove the teabag straightaway. Here's a practical alternative: place two teaspoons in the freezer for five minutes. Next, place the spoons on the swollen eyes, with the concave inner side resting against them. The cold is not only pleasant, it will also reduce the swelling. Important: Please ensure that the spoons don't stay in the freezer too long so they're not too cold. Placing the spoons on your eyes should never be uncomfortable. If this is the case, remove the spoons from your eyes immediately. Wait a little until the metal starts to warm up.

If you frequently suffer from swollen eyes, it's advisable to use a cooling eye mask (available from pharmacies and beauty and health retailers). The gel-filled mask is pleasantly cool, and thus soothes and refreshes the sensitive skin around the eyes. If the swelling is due to dry eyes, special eye drops can help stabilize the tear film and keep the eyes moist. This will reduce irritation. Then again, if an allergy is causing the swelling, antihistamines (available from pharmacies) can provide fast relief for acute symptoms. Special medication is used to treat allergies and works by easing or preventing

allergic reactions. Desensitisation can help beat the allergy; this is also known as specific immune therapy. Here, the allergy sufferer is administered a very weak form of the substance they're allergic to. This is then repeated for anywhere between six months and three years. In this way, the body gradually "accepts" the allergen – in a best-case scenario, without displaying any defence reactions. If high blood pressure or a heart or kidney disease is causing the swelling, your doctor will help you find the best course of treatment to fight the cause.

If neurodermatitis is causing the swelling, you will normally be prescribed a cortisone cream if your symptoms are acute. As not all creams and ointments are suitable for all parts of the skin, always consult a doctor before treating the sensitive area around the eyes.

An eye infection can cause the eyes to swell. A range of treatments are available depending on the type of swelling.

> [Read on to find out more about the most common eye infections and how they can be treated and/or prevented.](#)

Preventing swollen eyes:

As a number of things can cause swollen eyes, there are various forms of prevention. Avoid common causes wherever possible – such as drinking alcohol in the evening or eating foods that contain a lot of salt or protein. What's more, you can prevent swollen eyes by heeding the following tips:

- ✓ Get as much sleep as possible and try to maintain a regular sleeping pattern. Seven hours of sleep is ideal for most people.
- ✓ Your bedroom shouldn't be too warm as this can irritate the eyes. Everyone is different when it comes to how warm they need the bedroom to be, but a rule of thumb is to keep the temperature somewhere between 16 and 20 degrees.
- ✓ As bad air can irritate the eyes, all rooms should be aired properly at regular intervals to prevent dry, irritated and swollen eyes.
- ✓ Dehydration can also lead to dry and swollen eyes. That's why it's so important to drink plenty of fluids – ideally, up to two litres of water a day. Consuming less sugar can also help prevent swollen eyes.
- ✓ Many > [allergies](#) can lead to swollen eyes and dark circles.
- ✓ Consuming excessive amounts of sugar or alcohol, or using cosmetics that are scented or contain preservatives can also irritate the skin. In neurodermatitis sufferers, this can lead to swollen eyes. People with neurodermatitis should therefore ensure they keep to a healthy lifestyle and refrain from using harmful skincare products.
- ✓ If an > [eye infection](#) is causing the swelling, there are a number of prevention methods available depending on the type.

Dark circles under eyes

Symptoms of dark circles under eyes:

The skin under the eyes becomes dark. Depending on the severity of the dark circles, the eyes will appear haggard; severe dark circles cause some people to look unwell. The affected areas may appear brown, blue, grey or bluey-purple. The cause of dark circles is normally harmless and should not be confused with a black eye, which is a bruise caused by an external force.





Causes of dark circles under eyes:

In most cases, dark circles are merely a cosmetic and temporary problem. There are two main causes:

1. An excess of pigment deposits in the skin (hyperpigmentation)

The colour of the skin is regulated by aspects such as the pigment melanin. This is a substance in the cells that largely determines our skin tone. The more melanin we have, the darker our skin will be. If a large amount of melanin is deposited around the eyes, it will appear as blue or bluey-grey dark circles. In medicine, this is known as hyperpigmentation, or melasma. Dark circles due to hyperpigmentation can be hereditary. Some other causes are:

- Infections, illnesses and rashes (neurodermatitis, contact allergies)
- Frequent and intensive UV exposure
- Drugs and certain medications

2. Transparent vessels

The second most common cause of dark circles are transparent vessels. Below the eye is particularly thin skin and subcutaneous fat tissue – in some people, it's so thin that the blood vessels can be seen through the skin. This makes the affected area appear darker, which is why dark circles appear brown. The less oxygen supplied to the blood vessels, the more they will shimmer through the skin. That's because deoxygenated blood is darker than oxygenated blood. Other factors that cause dark circles in relation to transparent vessels are:

- Kidney and thyroid disease
- Pollutants (e.g. air and water pollution, exhaust fumes)
- Dehydration
- Poor diet, iron deficiency
- Drugs, alcohol and nicotine consumption
- Stress
- A lack of sleep

How to get rid of dark circles:

Simple home remedies can help reduce the acute symptoms of dark circles. One is a washcloth dipped in cold water. If you place this on your dark circles for five to ten minutes, the cold will cause the blood vessels to shrink and thus make the dark circles appear lighter. Just like when treating swollen eyes, gel-filled glasses or masks (available from pharmacies and beauty and health retailers) can have a similar effect, as can green or black teabags. To do so, simply take two green or black teabags, pour hot water over them, let them cool and then gently squeeze the teabag and place it on the affected areas. The caffeine in the tea will encourage the blood vessels under the skin to shrink, which will make the dark circles lighter. Please note: Some people may have an allergic reaction to a flavoured black teabag. If this is the case, remove the teabag straightaway. Gently massaging the affected area can help promote circulation and thus combat dark circles.





You can also hide dark circles quickly and easily – all you need to cover them is some concealer! If possible, the concealer should not dry out the skin but rather have a moisturizing effect. If you have sensitive or allergy-prone skin, it's advisable to use a fragrance-free concealer. Tip: Select a colour that's a shade lighter than your skin or make-up.

Preventing dark circles under eyes:

Depending on the cause, there are a number of ways to prevent the formation of dark circles. If the dark circles are caused by a poor diet, a switch to a healthy diet may be an effective form of prevention. If the cause is a lack of sleep, stress or drugs, alcohol or nicotine consumption, adopting a more balanced lifestyle will do a world of good. Dehydration is another common cause of dark circles. Drinking plenty of fluids is therefore an effective form of prevention.

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Red or sore eyes

Symptoms of red or sore eyes:

One or both eyes will either be very or slightly sore. People often complain of itching, burning and watery eyes all at once.



Causes of red or sore eyes:

Redness is caused by dilated vessels and increased circulation in either the conjunctiva or the sclera below it. These blood vessels are clearly visible against the white background of the sclera and there are so many of them that the eyes suddenly appear red when circulation increases. In

medicine, this is known as increased vascular drawing. Sore eyes can be caused by things like:

- An eyelid infection, such as one caused by an [allergy](#)
- High intraocular pressure
- [Dry eyes](#), e.g. due to dry ambient air
- A lack of sleep
- Overexerting the eyes, e.g. by spending a long time working at a screen and/or not blinking enough
- A burst vein, such as due to contamination of or injury to the eye
- Not corrected or improperly corrected [visual impairments](#)
- [Wearing contact lenses](#) for too long
- Viral infections, e.g. herpes
- Cosmetics like make-up and mascara (can cause the edges of the eyelids to stick together)
- [Conjunctivitis](#)

How to get rid of red or sore eyes:

A range of treatment methods can be used depending on the cause of red or sore eyes. The eye is a very sensitive organ – if in doubt, always consult a doctor instead of trying to treat a problem yourself. If the eyes become too dry and therefore red or sore, using artificial tear film can help supply the eyes with sufficient fluid. If the underlying cause is an allergy, antihistamines or cortisone eye drops and eye gels can provide fast relief. In the case of a bacterial infection, your eye doctor will prescribe a course of antibiotics. If uncorrected or improperly corrected visual impairments result in red or sore eyes, your eye doctor can perform a test and recommend the right glasses for you. For contact lens wearers: if your contacts are frequently causing your eyes to become red or sore, it may help to reduce the length of time you wear them or switch to a different contact lens brand or care product.

Preventing red or sore eyes:

As a number of things can cause red and sore eyes, there are various forms of prevention. Avoid the typical causes, such as external influences like dry air or draughts, chlorinated water, cigarette smoke and dust. These can all lead to conjunctivitis and thus to red or sore eyes. Women who use make-up every day are advised to clean their eyelid glands on a regular basis. This is easy to do: simply place a warm, moist cloth on the eyes for ten minutes. Then, gently massage the eyelids using lint-free cotton pads. If any fluid leaks from the eyelid glands, it can be removed using a moist cotton bud. If you wear contacts, you should ensure you read the instructions on the care product and do not exceed the wearing time, as recommended by the manufacturer. If your eyes are red or sore as a result of spending many hours working at a computer, you can prevent this by taking regular breaks (e.g. looking out the window or repeatedly blinking for a while). A special pair of [computer glasses](#) can thus deliver enhanced visual comfort.

Burning eyes

Symptoms of burning eyes:

The eyes itch, burn, feel irritated, and are sometimes painful and sore. Burning eyes are often accompanied by other complaints, such as red or sore eyes, the feeling of having a foreign body in your eye, itchy eyelids, sensitivity to light and more tear film.





Causes of burning eyes:

> [Dry eyes](#) (Sicca syndrome) often lead to burning eyes. As the tear fluid is not enough to keep the conjunctiva and cornea moist, this leads to irritation and thus to burning eyes. This may mean that the quality of the tear fluid is sub-optimal, or that not enough tear fluid is being produced. Burning eyes can also be caused by other things, e.g.:

- > [Allergies](#)
- Putting too much > [strain on the eyes](#), e.g. by spending long periods working at a screen
- Taking certain > [medications](#)
- Uncorrected or improperly corrected > [visual impairments](#)
- > [Conjunctivitis](#) and corneal infection
- Diseases like wetting disorders brought on by thyroid disease, diabetes or rheumatism

How to get rid of burning eyes:

A range of treatments are available depending on the cause of burning eyes. When you're suffering from burning eyes, special eye drops can provide fast relief. They stabilize the tear film and soothe the conjunctiva. If the underlying cause is an allergy, antihistamines or cortisone eye drops and eye gels can provide fast relief. In the case of a bacterial infection, your eye doctor will prescribe a course of antibiotics. If uncorrected or improperly corrected visual impairments lead to burning eyes, your eye doctor can recommend the best glasses for you. For contact lens wearers: If you frequently experience burning eyes when wearing your contacts, it may help to wear them for shorter periods or switch to a different contact lens brand or care product.

Preventing burning eyes:

Avoid the typical causes, such as external influences like dry air or draughts, chlorinated water, cigarette smoke and dust. These can all lead to conjunctivitis and cause burning eyes. If you wear contacts, you should ensure you read the instructions on the care product and do not exceed the wearing time, as recommended by the manufacturer. If your eyes are burning as a result of spending many hours working at a computer, you can eliminate it by taking regular breaks. For instance, stare into the distance now and again and moisten and relax the eyes by blinking. A special pair of computer glasses can thus deliver enhanced visual comfort.

|| Please note: *Even if most of these symptoms seem harmless, they may also indicate a serious illness. If in doubt, or if the symptoms get worse, please see a doctor immediately. This is crucial if you find it difficult to figure out what is causing your symptoms. A doctor or eye doctor will be able to make a definite diagnosis by taking your medical history.*

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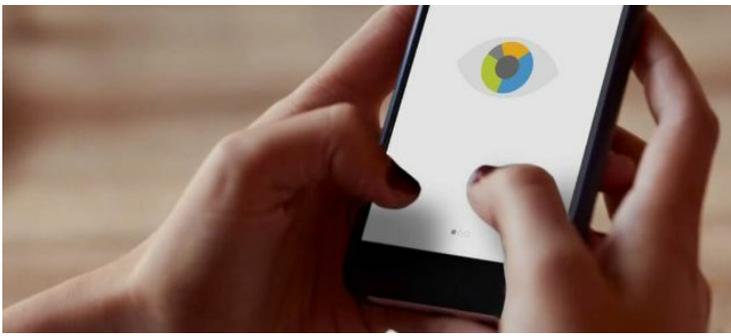
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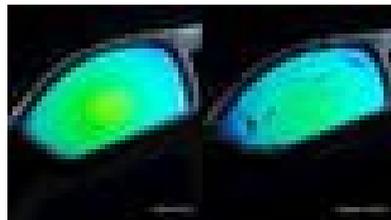
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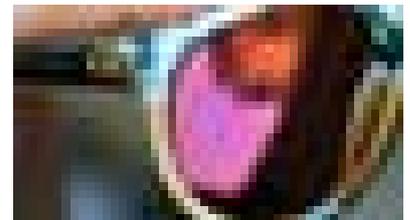
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