

## - Eye / Vision

# 5 reasons you're tearing up all the time

An ophthalmologist says causes range from mild and temporary to serious conditions

Manila Bulletin · 26 Apr 2022 · B-9

When looking for clues into the current state of your health, sometimes the answer could be staring right at you—literally. “The eyes are not just the windows to our soul. They can also tell us that something is going on in our body,” says Dr. Joanna Rodriguez-Chan, section chief of the Cornea and External Disease Section, Department of Ophthalmology of Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed). “More often than not, the condition is not serious and resolves on its own. Still, it is also good to see your doctor before it gets worse or leads to further complications.”



Take watery eyes, for instance. While tears are necessary because they keep your eyes lubricated and wash away dust and other tiny particles, an uncontrollable overflow of tears merits some looking into. “We call it epiphora, or the overproduction of tears,” Dr. Rodriguez-Chan explains. “The condition is due to a number of reasons, ranging from the benign to more complex diagnoses. Again, if your watery eyes persist, aren’t triggered by anything in particular, and are accompanied by other symptoms, do have them checked by your doctor.”

Wondering why your tears can’t stop flowing? Here are five likely causes:

#### Allergies.

“Exposure to harmless stimulants like dust, pet dander, fumes, or pollen makes your body react: You sneeze, you cough, and your eyes turn red, itchy, swollen, and watery,” says Dr. Rodriguez-Chan. “Over-the-counter antihistamines and eye drops usually address watery eyes, as does avoiding the stimulant.”

#### Conjunctivitis.

“Otherwise known as sore eyes and often associated with uncontrollable tearing, pus, and blurred vision, conjunctivitis is caused by a bacteria or virus that is passed during close contact or by touching a contaminated surface or object then touching your eyes,” she says. “This condition takes about one to two weeks to heal and can be treated with prescription eye drops in case of pain. Always wash or disinfect your hands before touching your eyes.”

#### Blocked tear ducts.

In each of our eyes are tear ducts found in the inside corner. These ducts naturally drain our tears across our eyes and down a duct into our nose. “When the ducts become narrow or blocked, the tears accumulate, causing an overflow as well as other symptoms: mucus, blurred vision, and even blood in your tears,” Dr. Rodriguez-Chan points out. “Your doctor can flush the ducts with saline and expand them with tiny tubes or balloons. In other cases, surgery is recommended to build a better duct.”

#### Dry eyes.

When you do not produce enough tears or your tears do not have enough water, oil, and mucus in them that they cannot lubricate your eyes adequately enough, you have what is known as dry eyes syndrome. “Dry eye disease has a stinging or scratchy sensation in the eyes,” says Dr. Rodriguez-Chan. “It is also accompanied by other symptoms like redness, a feeling that you have something in your eye, and sensitivity to light.” Ironically, dry eyes result in watery eyes, which is how the body responds to irritation.

#### Medical conditions.

Sometimes, watery eyes can be one of many symptoms of a more concerning condition. “Bell’s palsy, or the sudden weakness of facial muscles, is marked by such signs and symptoms as a drooping of one side of your face, drooling, headache, a loss of taste, and changes in the amount of tears or saliva you produce,” she explains. “Dry eyes can also be a manifestation of Sjogren’s syndrome and other autoimmune diseases. This particular autoimmune disorder attacks the glands in charge of your tears and saliva, leaving you with constantly dry eyes and mouth.”

Also caused by several factors (age, staring at a computer screen all day, chronic contact lens use, exposure to certain environmental conditions such as wind or sunlight, or taking certain medications), dry eyes are soothed with over-the-counter drops or “artificial tears.”

While watery eyes are not exactly a reason to panic, it should not be taken lightly either, especially when it is accompanied by other symptoms that interfere with your daily life. “There is no harm in consulting your health practitioner to rule out a condition or disease,” assures Dr. Rodriguez-Chan. “Whatever is causing it, deal with it early to avoid complications.”

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