

FAST FACTS: CHRONIC GVHD OF THE EYE

Learning more about your disease and treatment options can help you make informed medical decisions.

READ ON TO **LEARN ABOUT:**

- Chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) of the eye
- How to ease symptoms of chronic GVHD of the eye
- How chronic GVHD of the eye can be treated
- When to call your doctor

WHAT IS **CHRONIC GVHD OF THE EYE?**

- Chronic GVHD of the eye happens when the donor's cells attack the eye conjunctiva and glands. The conjunctiva is the tissue that covers the white part of your eye and the inside of your eyelids. Eye glands make tears that help your eyes stay moist and smooth.
- First, the conjunctiva and tear glands get inflamed (red and swollen). Then the glands stop making enough tears. When this happens you may feel some grittiness, discomfort or pain.
- Later the conjunctiva and glands become scarred and damaged. When this happens your eye glands can't make the tears that keep your eyes moist and smooth. Your eyes may become very irritated and painful.

WHAT CAN I DO TO **DECREASE SYMPTOMS?**

- Keep your eyes moist to reduce your eye dryness as much as possible and to stop damage to your eyes.
- Stay out of wind, air conditioning, and dry environments.

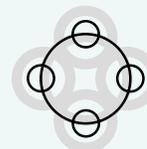
- To keep your eyes moist, use artificial tears. You can buy artificial tears from a drug store or pharmacy without a prescription. Use the ones that are preservative free. Preservatives can irritate your eyes. There are many brands of artificial tears. People often try several before finding one that works for them.
- To keep your eyes moist while you sleep, use eye gel or ointment at night. This is especially important if you don't close your eyes completely when you sleep.
- Take flaxseed oil. Mix 2 tablespoons with your juice or food every day.

WHAT **OTHER TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?**

- Prescription eye drops that have immunosuppressant medicines (medicines that hold back your immune system) may help. Examples include cyclosporine or steroids.
- Prescription pills that help your body make more tears may help. Examples include cevimeline or pilocarpine.
- Punctal plugs are placed to block the tiny tubes that drain your tears from your eyes. This makes your tears last longer. Punctal plugs can be temporary or permanent.

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The information in this fact sheet was developed jointly by Be The Match and the Chronic Graft Versus Host Disease Consortium.



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- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any of your other medicines could be making your dry eyes worse. Some medicines, like pain medicine, antihistamines, antidepressants, and sleeping pills, may cause dry eyes.
- Autologous serum eye drops are special eye drops made just for you by a pharmacy. The liquid from a tube of your blood is put into vials for you to put in your eyes like eye drops. The liquid part of your blood contains a lot of proteins that help tissues heal.
- Bandage contact lenses or PROSE lenses are special protective contact lenses that protect the eye from damage caused by dryness. Ask your eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist) or transplant doctor if these could be an option for you.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- Symptoms of mild chronic GVHD of the eye may get better with treatment.
- Severe dry eye is often permanent.
- Vision is usually not affected unless the surface of the eye is very damaged.
- Sometimes eyesight is blurry because of dry eyes and irritation. This improves if the eye is lubricated.
- Chronic GVHD does not affect the inner eye structures or the nerves responsible for vision.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR?

- Your eyes get more dry.
- Your eyes hurt.
- Your vision changes.

OTHER RESOURCES TO HELP YOU LEARN MORE

Be The Match® has a variety of free resources to help you after transplant.

Visit **BeTheMatch.org/patient-survive** and choose the resources that best meet your needs.

Here are some you might find helpful:

- TOOLKIT: *After Transplant Care Guidelines*
- WEBCAST: *Living Now—Your Role in Managing Your Chronic GVHD*

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AT EVERY STEP, WE'RE **HERE TO HELP**

Be The Match has a team dedicated to providing information and support to you before, during, and after transplant. You can contact us to ask questions you may have about transplant, request professional or peer support, or receive free patient education materials.

CALL: **1 (888) 999-6743** | EMAIL: **patientinfo@nmdp.org** | WEB: **BeTheMatch.org/patient-survive**



Every individual's medical situation, transplant experience, and recovery is unique. You should always consult with your own transplant team or family doctor regarding your situation. This information is not intended to replace, and should not replace, a doctor's medical judgment or advice.