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CAUSES OF CHRONIC DRY EYE DISEASE (CDED):

- **The Aging Process:** Tear flow normally decreases with age. In fact, approximately 75% of individuals over age 65 suffer from CDED symptoms.
- **Concurrent Blepharitis:** Inflammation of the eyelids can decrease the ability to produce good quality tears, sometimes treatment of blepharitis is necessary to treat dry eyes.
- **Contact Lens Wear:** Contact lens wear can dramatically increase tear evaporation, causing discomfort, infection, and/or increased protein deposits. Research shows that CDED is the leading cause of contact lens intolerance.
- **Hormonal Changes in Women:** Various hormonal changes associated with pregnancy, oral contraceptives and menopause can contribute to CDED.
- **Environmental Factors:** People who are exposed to smoke, air pollution, high altitude, sunny, windy, cold or dry air conditions are at risk for CDED.
- **Side Effects:** There are several diseases and medications which can lower your ability to produce tears. Be sure to give your doctor a complete medical history.
- **SJÖGREN'S Syndrome:** An immune system disorder characterized by inflammation and dryness of the mouth, eyes and other mucous membranes. This disorder damages the lacrimal glands and affects tear production.
- **Laser Vision Correction Surgeries:** Following various ophthalmic surgical procedures, patients may develop CDED.

TREATMENTS:

It is important to first find out the cause of dry eyes. Depending on the intensity of the condition, treatment may be as simple as using **artificial tears a few times a day**. In more persistent cases, prescription medication such as **Restasis (Cyclosporine 0.05%)** to induce tearing can be given. Alternatively, a simple non-surgical procedure is available that provides long-term relief of CDED through the use of tiny plugs called “punctal occluders.”

WHAT ARE PUNCTAL OCCLUDERS?

As the name suggests, these devices occlude (block) the punctum, or tear duct, which is the drainage duct that carries tears away from the surface of the eye. There are upper and lower punctum ducts in the inner corner of each eye. Blocking these drainage ducts prevents tears from draining away too quickly. These are barely visible, made of flexible silicone, similar to that used in contact lenses.

