Dry eye treatment: Stop at the grocery before the pharmacy

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Dry eye is a multifactorial disease, but inflammation plays a key role in most cases. Once simple dry eye fixes like artificial tears, warm compresses, and lid hygiene fail, we often move to prescription medications to target inflammation. Before you reach for the prescription pad, consider another simpler option that can decrease dry eye symptoms and improve overall health.

Found naturally in flaxseed oil and fish like salmon and tuna, omega-3 fatty acids are essential. Omega-3’s aren’t produced by the digestive system, but they provide necessary anti-inflammatory and anti-coagulant activity.1 Omega-3 consumption has been shown to improve cardiovascular health, brain function, and arthritis symptoms.2

In dry eye, these oils decrease inflammation of the meibomian and lacrimal glands, allowing more stable, consistent tear production. Studies have shown omega-3 dietary supplementation can improve both symptoms and clinical signs of dry eye within one to three months.1,3,4 This time period is equal to or less than the time it takes to see results with a cyclosporine prescription medication.5

Supplementation with omega-3’s is generally less expensive and invasive than treatment with anti-inflammatory eye drops. Patients can choose to increase their omega-3 intake naturally through diet or with the help of supplements. The most common side effect is stomach upset.3 This can be alleviated by taking the supplement with a meal. Contact lens wearers will enjoy uninterrupted wear time since no eye drops are involved. As well, omega-3 supplementation offers a practice building opportunity. Practitioners can provide the supplements in office, saving the patient a trip to the pharmacy.

Overall, omega-3 fatty acids provide a natural, healthy option for dry eye treatment. Their anti-inflammatory properties decrease Meibomian gland inflammation, allow more regular tear production, decrease dry eye symptoms, and can even improve systemic health. Knowing these benefits, omega-3 supplementation is an attractive dry eye treatment option.

References:

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