

Nearly 5 million Americans have dry eyes

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Nearly 5 million people in the United States are affected by Dry Eye Syndrome, a study released Friday said.

The syndrome affects 7.8 percent of women and 4.7 of men older than 50, says the study published in the March edition of the American Journal of Ophthalmology.

Dry Eye Syndrome, or DES, symptoms include a shortage of tears, damage to the eye surface, dryness and fluctuating visual disturbances. The cause of the syndrome is largely unknown.

DES is one of the most common reasons people seek eye care, the study said. Researchers found the syndrome can have a big impact on peoples' daily activities, including reading, driving, working and watching television, especially if their dry eyes are more severe and can't be cleared with a few blinks.

"The present study suggests that DES can have a significant impact on visual function that can diminish a person's quality of everyday living," said Dr. Debra A. Schaumberg of the Schepens Eye Research at Harvard Medical School. "More specifically, the present study shows that crucial daily activities of modern living such as reading, computer use, professional work, driving and TV watching are all negatively impacted by DES."

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