Dry Eye Syndrome is a condition that may leave the eyes irritable, uncomfortable, and tired, a result of insufficient moisture and lubrication. This discomfort, however, can be easily remedied with simple lifestyle changes and the appropriate treatments suggested by an eye care professional.

**Figure 1**
Dry Eye Syndrome can leave the eyes red and irritated, due to lack of moisture in the eyes.
http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/dryeye.htm

Dry eyes can be caused by inadequate tear production or production of low quality tears. Tears are a mixture composed of water, fatty oils, and mucus. An imbalance in this composition, as well as environmental factors (i.e. wind and dry air), can contribute to dryness in the eyes. Prolonged use of the television and computer forces the eyes to remain open for a longer time period, decreasing the frequency of blinking. Only with blinking are the eyes continually coated with tears – the protective film of moisture. Other factors including age, tear gland damage, and prior eye laser procedures can increase the likelihood of having dry eyes.

Characteristic symptoms include a burning or scratching sensation, redness, fatigue, sensitivity to light, excessive tearing, and stringy mucus in or around the eyes. Left untreated, dry eyes can result in difficulty with wearing contacts and also blurred vision. Without proper lubrication on the eye, there is a greater risk of inflammation, infection, scratching, and scarring. Neglecting to address these concerns early on with an optometrist can lead to greater health problems. This is why an annual eye examination is recommended.

There are many treatment options catering to individuals suffering from dry eyes. Artificial tears, as well as over-the-counter eyedrops, can be used and are easily accessible. Prescription medications are also available, for instance, antibiotics to reduce eyelid inflammation and even prescription eye inserts that perform like artificial tears. In extreme cases, surgery can be opted to close tear ducts to reduce tear loss or unclogging oil glands as needed.

**Figure 2**
Using artificial tears can supplement the natural tear production and alleviate dryness in the eyes.
Optometry Tidbit

Dry Eyes: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

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References

http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dry-eyes/DS00463