

Thyroid eye disease

- Thyroid eye disease usually occurs if you have an overactive thyroid gland, but can occur in people with a normal or underactive thyroid gland.
- Early in the disease, the area around your eyes becomes puffy and swollen. Your eyes seem to 'stare' because the eyelids are pulled back, and swollen muscles around and behind the eye push it forwards.
- Your eyes may feel gritty, sore and watery, and bright lights may be uncomfortable. Using artificial tears and wearing tinted glasses may help during the day. Applying lubricating ointment at bedtime can stop your eyes drying out during the night, and sleeping slightly propped up may reduce swelling. Try to stop smoking.
- The swollen muscles behind your eyes may press on the optic nerve that carries signals to the brain and cause blurred vision. If you have blurred vision, consult your eye specialist immediately because you may need urgent treatment with high-dose steroids, radiotherapy or an operation to lessen the pressure on the nerve.
- Double vision also happens when the muscles that move the eye swell and start to scar, restricting eye movement. Wearing temporary plastic prisms on glasses may help by joining the two images, but if eye movement is very restricted you may need an operation on your eye muscles. The final adjustment of the muscle is usually done under local anaesthesia, so that you can tell the eye specialist when your double vision disappears.

