

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY OCULAR SURFACE

Treating dry eye disease with punctal plugs may improve visual outcomes for a variety of patients.

BY FRANCIS A. D'AMBROSIO JR, MD



A healthy ocular surface is very important for positive visual outcomes of all types of patients, including those with cataracts and glaucoma as well as those who use contact lenses or receive refractive lens implants.

TREATING DRY EYE DISEASE

All patients who come into my practice D'Ambrosio Eye Care for an eye examination have their tear film evaluated. If their tear film breakup time (TBUT) is low, they are diagnosed with dry eye disease (DED). I prescribe for them a nonpreserved artificial tear drop, and I explain to them some of the causes and treatments of DED. If they use computers, I tell them to try to blink about every 10 seconds. If they are at a computer most of the day, I have them instill tear drops more frequently.

If they are achieving some relief from the drops and the increased blinking, and I see that their TBUT has improved, I then plug the inferior puncta in both eyes. I always start with the 90-day SOFT PLUG Extended Duration Punctal Plugs (OASIS Medical) (Figure 1). I tell patients that they need to produce better tears and prevent those tears from evaporating too quickly. The artificial tear drops thicken their tears, dissolve some of the bad enzymes, and coat their eyes, but the tears still evaporate too quickly. The plugs in their lower lids prevent the tears from draining too fast, then they dissolve within about 3 months. Patients do not feel or see the plugs, and I tell them that the only thing they will notice is relief from their symptoms of DED.

I prefer that patients return for follow-up in about 2 months. At that time I often see that their TBUT has improved. At this point, I usually place the SOFT PLUG Silicone Punctal Plugs (OASIS Medical) (Figure 2). I tell patients that this is a long-term solution that can be reversed. They like hearing that, because most often these patients are younger and are hesitant to do something that may be permanent. I then follow-up with them about 3 months later, and if their eyes are still a little dry, I will insert the 90-day SOFT PLUG Extended Duration Punctal Plugs in the upper lids. This may cause excessive tearing, but most patients feel even greater relief.

CASE EXAMPLE

A 38-year-old woman came in for an eye examination

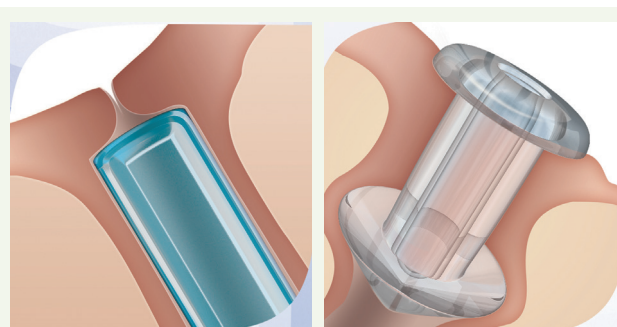


Figure 1. OASIS Medical's SOFT PLUG Extended Duration Punctal Plugs are absorbable and last up to 3 months.

Figure 2. OASIS Medical's SOFT PLUG Silicone Punctal Plugs are a long-term solution that can be reversed.

complaining of red eyes and blurred vision. I prescribed non-preserved artificial tear drops 4 times per day, and I placed the 90-day SOFT PLUG Extended Duration Punctal Plugs during that visit. A few weeks later, she called the office to say she could not believe how much her vision improved and that her eyes were no longer red. She had been seeing her eye doctor regularly for years, but her eyes always bothered her until now. It is interesting that when she came in to see me, she had all the classic symptoms: ocular irritation on cold or windy days, sticky eyes in the morning, and red eyes after computer work or reading. Her TBUT was 3 seconds when I first examined her. On her follow-up visit, it improved to 8 seconds. Although not a healthy number, it is enough to significantly improve her DED. ■

OASIS Medical offers a broad line of punctal plugs, including short-term punctal occluders such as SOFT PLUG Collagen and SOFT PLUG Extended Duration, and long-term punctal occluders such as SOFT PLUG Silicone and FORM FIT Hydrogel Intracanalicular Plugs. Call: (844) 820-8940; Visit: oasismedical.com.

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