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## **What is thyroid eye disease?**

Thyroid eye disease is an auto-immune disorder which causes the muscles and soft tissues in and around your eye socket to become inflamed and swell. It can also be known as Thyroid Orbitopathy, Graves' Orbitopathy or Grave's Ophthalmopathy. There is an 'active phase' when the swelling occurs. The active phase usually takes 6 months to 2 years. After the active phase the condition becomes inactive or 'burnt out'.

## **What will I notice?**

Some signs and symptoms might include:

**Grittiness or sore eyes** - this can be caused by a difficulty shutting your eyes fully

**Watery eyes** - the eyes produce excessive tears to combat irritation and dry eyes

**Light sensitivity**

**Puffiness around the eyes**

**Bulging/staring appearance of the eyes** - The lids may not be in their normal position so more of the white of the eyes show. The swelling of soft tissues behind the eyes can push them forwards slightly (proptosis or exophthalmos).

**Red eyes** - they may become more blood shot than usual.

**Double vision and restricted eye movements** - caused by the swollen eye muscles.

**Changes to your vision** - very rarely, the swollen tissues behind the eye compress your optic nerve— seek medical treatment straight away if you notice this. It is also important to attend appointments in the Eye department to monitor changes of which you may not be aware.

## **How is it treated?**

Artificial tears can be used to prevent sore and watery eyes.

Wearing sunglasses may help keep you comfortable in bright light.

Prisms may be able help with any double vision that occurs, otherwise covering one eye will resolve the double vision.

Immunosuppression may-be needed if the TED is worsening affecting eye movement or threatening the optic nerve/vision. Treatment could include corticosteroids, radiotherapy or orbital surgery.

After the condition has burnt out, some of the swelling can improve. Unfortunately, there are cases where the eyes do not return to normal. Further treatment may be available to improve the appearance of the eyes. Some people may also benefit from psychological/emotional support following the changes.

Some people can be left with double vision and may be given spectacle prisms. Prisms may be prescribed in addition to surgery to help correct or reduce the double vision.

## **What can I do?**

Keeping control of your thyroid hormone levels is important.

Smoking can significantly worsen both the chances of getting thyroid eye disease and also worsen and prolong the disease itself. By stopping smoking this will reduce the severity of the active phase. If you would like help to stop smoking visit your GP and/or [www.stopsmokingwales.com](http://www.stopsmokingwales.com)

Sleeping propped up with extra pillows will help reduce the puffiness around your eyes.

Taking selenium supplements can sometimes help with mild thyroid eye disease.

## **Useful websites:**

[www.btf-thyroid.org/thyroid-eye-disease](http://www.btf-thyroid.org/thyroid-eye-disease)

[www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions/thyroid-eye-disease](http://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions/thyroid-eye-disease)

[www.tedct.org.uk](http://www.tedct.org.uk)

**“This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**