Screen younger patients for dry eye

Scott Schachter, OD

January 16, 2015

Recently, I shared my dry eye protocol. I hope you found it is an effective, efficient way to look for and treat dry eye disease in your practice. You will also have to decide whom to screen.

Creating a dry eye protocol

In my practice, we screen patients age 25 and over. This is a relatively arbitrary number, but I wanted to skew younger. We often think of dry eye disease as being an older person's disease. There are a number of reasons why I decided to look at younger patients.

Identifying dry eye patients

Young adults spend a large amount of time staring at devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, etc. A recent study showed that adults 18 and over spend five hours per day online. This trend is likely to continue.

Average blink rates are 17 per minute or every three to four seconds. Some studies have shown that blink rates are as low as 4.5 per minute when reading. People also have more incomplete blinks when using these devices. You would need a tear film break-up time (TFBUT) of 12 to 15 seconds to
In addition, many of these younger patients are on medications that can cause dry eye—medications for ADD/ADHD, birth control, antihistamines, and antidepressants, just to name a few.

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