

Thyroid Eye Disease

[Thyroid eye disease](#) (TED) is an autoimmune condition in which the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue in and around the eye. Although TED is also referred to as Graves' ophthalmopathy, TED can occur as a part of Graves' disease or on its own.

Every year, 1 million Americans are diagnosed with TED.

TED is **5-6x more common in women than men**⁶

Risk factors for TED:

- Personal history of Graves' disease or other thyroid dysfunction
- Cigarette smoking
- Middle-age
- Female
- Family history of thyroid disease
- Recent radioiodine therapy
- Low blood levels of the dietary mineral selenium

Common Symptoms

- Dry, watery, or red eyes
- Bulging eyes
- Puffy eyelids
- Double vision
- Difficulty closing the eyes
- Pain or discomfort behind the eyes or with eye movement

Diagnosing TED

Your eye doctor can evaluate your vision symptoms during a [comprehensive eye exam](#). If TED is suspected, they will likely recommend consulting your primary care provider or an [endocrinologist](#) to assess your [thyroid gland](#) function. There are also some eye care providers that specialize in the treatment of TED.

Treatment Options

TED often occurs in individuals with thyroid dysfunction, but it is not caused by thyroid disease itself. If a thyroid disorder is confirmed, restoring proper thyroid function will be a priority, but may not directly treat your eye symptoms. Treatment for TED can occur alongside treatment for your thyroid disorder, if necessary.

TED has an active phase of 1-3 years. Treatment during this phase is focused on preserving sight while inflammation and progression are actively occurring.

Treatments may include:

- Managing dry eye symptoms
 - Eye rest (i.e., sleeping with eyes taped shut or moisture chamber goggles)
 - Lubricating eye drops and ointments
 - Punctal plugs to prevent fluid from draining from the eye
- Reducing inflammation
 - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
 - Corticosteroids
 - Monoclonal antibody therapy
 - Orbital radiation therapy
- Surgery
 - Orbital decompression surgery to allow more room in the eye socket to manage swelling and reduce compression on the optic nerve

In the **secondary (remission) phase**, treatment may include surgical procedures (e.g., eyelid, eye muscle, and orbital decompression surgery) to target and reduce symptoms that resulted from changes surrounding the eye and upper face.

TED can cause pain, reduce the clarity of vision, and result in irreversible vision loss. The physical symptoms can also take a toll on self-perception and the mental health and well-being of those who have the condition, particularly women. See the

[Resources and Support Groups](#) section of the SWHR Guide to Women's Eye Health for resources for individuals with TED.