NORTH TORONTO EYE CARE
NORTH TORONTO EYE SURGERY CENTRE

2065 Finch Ave W, North York, ON M3N 2V7
7 Elmwood Ave, North York, ON M3N 2V7
2 Champagne Dr Unit C2, Toronto, ON M3J 0K2

Tear Osmolarity Testing (Tear Osmo) Information Sheet

What is Meibomian Gland Dysfunction and/or Evaporative Dry Eye Syndrome?

Meibomian Gland Dysfunction (MGD) is a common condition where the Meibomian glands, located in the eyelids, do not function properly. These glands secrete an oily substance that helps to lubricate the surface of the eye and prevent tears from evaporating too quickly. When the Meibomian glands become blocked or dysfunctional, the quality and quantity of the oil they produce may be insufficient. This can lead to a range of symptoms, including dryness, irritation, redness, itching, and a gritty sensation in the eyes.

Evaporative Dry Eye Syndrome is a type of dry eye condition where there is an imbalance in the tear film, resulting in excessive evaporation of tears. Normally, the tear film consists of three layers: an outer oily layer produced by the Meibomian glands, a middle aqueous layer, and an inner mucous layer. When there is inadequate oil production from the Meibomian glands, the outer oily layer may be deficient, causing tears to evaporate too quickly and leaving the eyes dry and irritated.

Both Meibomian Gland Dysfunction and Evaporative Dry Eye Syndrome can result in similar symptoms and may overlap in some cases. Effective management typically involves addressing the underlying cause, such as using warm compresses, eyelid hygiene, artificial tears, or in more severe cases, treatments like Lipiflow® to clear blocked Meibomian glands and improve the quality of the tear film.

What is Tear Osmolarity Testing?

Tear osmolarity testing is a diagnostic procedure used to measure the concentration of solutes, such as salts and other dissolved particles, in the tear film of the eye. This test is commonly utilized to diagnose and manage dry eye disease.

Tear osmolarity refers to the concentration of dissolved particles in the tear film. In healthy eyes, the osmolarity is balanced. However, in dry eye disease, this balance is disrupted, often resulting in increased osmolarity (hyperosmolarity). High osmolarity indicates a higher concentration of solutes due to reduced tear production or increased evaporation, which are characteristic of dry eye conditions.

How is it performed?

- Collection of Tear Sample:
    - A small, disposable, and sterile microcapillary tube or a specialized device (such as the TearLab Osmolarity System) is used to collect a tiny volume of tear fluid, typically around 50 nanoliters, from the lower tear meniscus of the eye. This is the thin film of tear fluid that pools along the edge of the lower eyelid.
- Measurement:
    - The collected tear sample is analyzed using an osmometer. Devices like the TearLab system directly measure the osmolarity of the sample by determining changes in

properties such as freezing point depression or vapor pressure, which correlate with solute concentration. These modern devices are designed to be user-friendly and provide rapid results.

- Analysis and Interpretation:
    - The osmometer provides a reading of the tear osmolarity in milliosmoles per liter (mOsm/L). Normal tear osmolarity typically ranges from about 275 to 300 mOsm/L.
    - Elevated osmolarity readings (generally above 308 mOsm/L) indicate hyperosmolarity and are suggestive of dry eye disease.
    - Consistent measurements with high osmolarity or significant variability between the eyes can be diagnostic indicators of the severity of dry eye disease.

Prognosis and possible risks:

Meibomian Gland Dysfunction (MGD) is a condition that tends to worsen over time if left untreated. Choosing not to undergo this test may allow your condition to progress, potentially limiting future treatment options and leading to delayed or inaccurate diagnosis.

Tear osmolarity testing is a safe and non-invasive procedure with minimal risks. However, like any medical test, there are a few potential side effects, though they are rare and usually mild. These include discomfort, redness or irritation. Overall, tear osmolarity testing is considered very low-risk and is well-tolerated by most patients.

What are the advantages of Tear Osmo?

1. **Accuracy:** Tear osmolarity testing provides objective and quantitative measurements of tear film composition, allowing for accurate diagnosis of dry eye disease.
2. **Early Detection:** It can detect subtle changes in tear osmolarity, enabling early detection and intervention for dry eye disease before symptoms become severe.
3. **Monitoring Progress:** By regularly monitoring tear osmolarity levels, healthcare providers can assess the effectiveness of treatments and track disease progression over time.
4. **Personalized Treatment:** Tear osmolarity testing helps healthcare providers tailor treatment plans to individual patients, optimizing therapeutic outcomes.
5. **Non-invasive:** The procedure is minimally invasive and well-tolerated by most patients, making it suitable for routine clinical use.
6. **Quantifiable Data:** Tear osmolarity testing provides quantitative data, facilitating objective assessment and comparison of tear film health between patients and over time.
7. **Comprehensive Evaluation:** It offers a comprehensive evaluation of tear film dynamics, aiding in the diagnosis of various ocular surface conditions beyond dry eye disease.
8. **Research Tool:** Tear osmolarity testing is also valuable for research purposes, contributing to a better understanding of tear film physiology and the development of new treatment strategies.

Overall, Tear Osmo offers an effective and safe solution for diagnosing Meibomian Gland Dysfunction and associated dry eye symptoms, providing patients with improved ocular comfort and quality of life.