

Punctal occlusion

_____patient

_____date

IN BRIEF

Punctal occlusion means blocking some or all of the **puncta** (small openings in the corners of the eyes near the nose, through which tears drain). This is done in order to improve the lubrication of the eye surface by slowing down tear drainage in people who are aqueous deficient (have low tear production).

Punctal occlusion is one of the most frequently used techniques for treating dry eye, after **artificial tear supplements**. The two general approaches to punctal occlusion are **punctal plugs** (small plugs inserted in the **puncta** or **canalicula**) or **punctal cautery** (surgical sealing of the puncta).

Here is some practical information about the process of punctal occlusion.

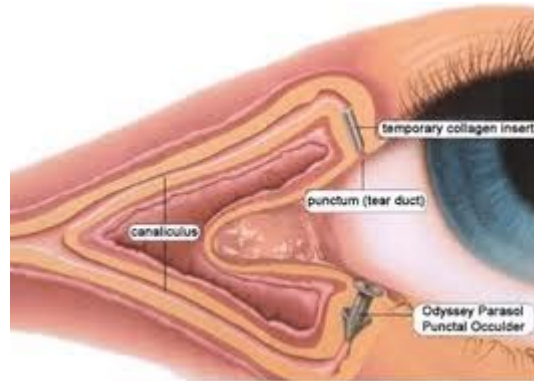
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a punctum and what are punctum plugs? (Where are punctum plugs placed in the eye?)

Puncta are the 4 drainage ducts that your old tears, or extra tears, can escape through while your glands are making new ones. In each of your eyes, there is one punctum in the top eyelid and another on the bottom eyelid, at the corner of the eye that is towards your nose.

For patients whose dry eye symptoms are caused primarily by a deficiency in the water (**aqueous**) part of their tears, stopping the drains (called **punctal occlusion**) can sometimes help improve the symptoms. There are two ways to do this: using small **plugs**, or permanently sealing the openings with **cautery**. Plugs are far and away the most common of the two treatments. These include temporary **collagen plugs**, which dissolve by themselves, which can be placed in order to test the likelihood that silicone plugs or cautery will be helpful and will not result in tear overflow (**epiphora**).

Punctal plugs stop the drains, just like the plug in your kitchen sink.



Why might I get collagen plugs first?

Collagen plugs dissolve on their own, usually within a few days of insertion. They are a useful way to determine whether you might be a good candidate for non dissolvable punctal plugs, such as silicone punctal plugs.

What is it like to get plugs? Does it hurt?

Punctal plugs are fit right into the top of the punctum.

Dr. Janot will use a numbing drop, placed in the inner corner of your eye, so that you will experience no discomfort. He will seat you at the biomicroscope and use a lacrimal dilator to gently “massage” and slightly relax the punctum. Next, he will insert either the temporary collagen plug with forceps or the non dissolvable silicone plug with a sterile, pre-loaded applicator. In either case, there is no cutting, suturing, bleeding, and minimal awareness, and the procedure is done right in the office.

What happens once the plugs are in?

After the anesthetic wears off, you may be mildly sore from the insertion process. Some people may have a mild uncomfortable sensation which may last up to a few days. This “awareness” will pass and in a couple of days you'll feel much better. On the other hand, if you see swelling, have excess tearing after a few days, or have constant pain, please call our office.