COMMON OCULAR ALLERGIES

Allergy reactions in the eye are usually due to airborne allergens, contact allergens, and reactions to allergens associated with various microbial agents (bacteria, viruses etc). Sometimes eye allergies can be due to systemic hypersensitivity. In other words, something that is causing an allergic response in the whole body. Hence the only true way to cure an allergy is either to:
1. **Remove the cause of the allergy**. This may not always be practical or it may be difficult to isolate a single allergen as the cause.
   *OR*
2. **Become desensitised to the particular allergen**. Course of immunotherapy provided by an allergist may help desensitise the patient to specific allergens, however, may only be considered in severe cases due to the expense and time involved in testing and the treatment.

**OCULAR ALLERGIES are mainly associated with HAY FEVER.**

**Allergen:**
Most common agents are pollens, animal hairs or feathers, mould spores, house dust, insects and scents.

**Symptoms:**
- Patients complain of moderate itching, tearing, burning, and a feeling of pressure behind the eye.
- A stringy discharge maybe present. The eyes may be red with slight swelling in the lids and small papillae (little bumps) under the top and bottom eye lids.
Treatment:
a) Irrigation at least twice daily with lubricating eye drops. Single dose units are very good because they are unpreserved, simple and inexpensive to use. You cannot over use lubricating eye drops and although they do not cure the allergy they will significantly help alleviate the symptoms.
b) You can also apply cold compresses (cold face washer) on the closed eyes to help relieve the itchy discomfort.
c) Severe symptoms may need a decongestant / antihistamine eye drop.