

*Columbus Ophthalmology Associates*  
**THYROID EYE DISEASE**

**What is thyroid disease?**

The thyroid gland, located in the neck, produces hormones that help control the body's metabolism. If control of these hormones becomes imbalanced, eye disorders can result. When there is an overproduction of thyroid, patients experience significant weight loss, hair loss, fast heart beat, and hypertension. Low thyroid, most often causes fatigue and a slow heart beat.

**How does thyroid disease affect the eye?**

When the thyroid levels are very high, the lids become retracted, giving a "staring" appearance. The eye can become dry because of the increased exposure to air. There can also be swelling of the area around the eye, pushing the eye forward causing an even more prominent characteristic appearance. This can lead to double vision and, in more severe cases, optic nerve damage.

**How is this condition diagnosed and treated?**

Blood tests to evaluate the thyroid levels will help establish the diagnosis. An endocrinologist or internist can treat the dysfunctioning thyroid gland.

The ophthalmologist's treatment of Grave's Disease may involve several measures. If there are just some dry eye problems then ointments or artificial tears will help make the patient more comfortable. If there is significant swelling however, then steroids, radiation or surgery of the orbit (eye socket) may be necessary.

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