

The ElderCare Patient Education Series includes:

Aging and Your Response to Medicines
Alcohol: Friend or Foe?
Did You Remember to Ask? The Consumer's Quick Reference to Using Medicines
Eye Medicines: May Be More Than Meets the Eye
The Caregiver's Guide to Using Medicines
Medicines and Travel: "All Aboard" With the Older Adult's Medicine Travel Guidelines
Personal Medicine Record
Home Safety Issues: Poison Prevention for Older Adults—Accidents They Don't Have to Happen!
Vitamins Are Not Enough: A Nutritional and Vitamin Guide for Older Adults
OTCs (Over-the-Counter Medicines): Choosing the Right Nonprescription Medicine
Questions You May Have About Generic Medicines
How to Select Your Pharmacy and Pharmacist



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Additional warnings

- Discard unused eye medicines after three months.
- Never share eye medicines with anyone
- Be sure to tell your doctor and pharmacist about other medicines you are taking, including tablets and liquids. They could affect your vision.
- If you have any eye conditions (e.g., *glaucoma*), be sure to tell all your doctors and your pharmacist when getting a new medicine.
- Report any drug or food allergies to your doctor or pharmacist. Eye medicines contain many ingredients, including preservatives that may cause allergy in susceptible patients.

Questions to ask if . . .

You or Your Patient Has Difficulty Applying Eye Medicines.

- Is the exact dose (*number of drops*) critical?
- Can you or your patient feel it when the drop goes into the eye? (*This may help to 'count' the number of drops.*)
- Is there a caregiver who can assist with giving the drops?
- Are there special devices that can help to put eye drops into the eye correctly?

Eye Medicines

May Be More Than Meets the Eye



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Eye Medicines

Are used to treat different medical conditions of the eye or eyelids, such as . . .

- **Glaucoma**

Two main types (important to know which type you have):

Open Angle (wide angle): most common.

Angle closure (narrow angle): may be worsened by certain medicines.

- **Infection**

Medicine is given to treat or prevent infection, often after eye surgery.

- **Inflammation**

May be caused by conditions such as allergy, infection, surgery, and trauma.

- **Irritation**

Redness and tearing, often due to dust pollen, swimming, and tiredness.

- **Simple Dryness or “Scratchiness”**

May be caused by changes in normal tear production or dry air.

Eye Medicines Come in Many Forms

Solutions	clear liquids
Suspensions	“cloudy” liquids (must shake well)
Washes	used to flush dust or other irritants from eye
Gels	usually clear, water- washable
Ointments	not water-washable

Note: Gels and ointments are most often used at night because they remain in the eye longer and may disturb vision during the day.

May be nonprescription or prescription

Nonprescription eye medicines are:

- for short-term use (*no more than 5 - 7 days*).
- for mild, self-limiting conditions.
(*e.g., irritation, dry eyes*)
- never used for infection or inflammation unless ordered by your doctor.

Prescription eye medicines are:

- to be used for a specific length of time.
(*Ask your doctor “how long” for each individual eye medicine.*)
- used to cure or prevent infection.
- used to prevent conditions such as glaucoma from worsening.
- closely monitored by your doctor.

WARNING!

- Misuse of eye medicines can lead to blindness!
- Check with your pharmacist before purchasing a nonprescription product, if unsure of the problem.

Common side effects of eye medicines

- blurred vision
- change in near or distant vision
- eye discomfort or irritation
- headache or brow pain

These may be simple problems which will disappear or may be serious.

Check with your pharmacist and doctor!

When putting in eye drops

- wash hands thoroughly,
- tilt head back,
- pull lower lid out to make a pouch,
- drop medicine into sac,
- close eye gently.
- If using more than one drop, wait at least two minutes between each drop. Some doctors suggest placing a finger to the bridge of the nose (near the inside corner of the eye) to prevent drainage and swallowing.

Caution

Be sure you know how many drops to use for each medicine. This can be critical for some medicines. Ask how long to wait between applying different eye medicines.

When applying eye ointments or gels

- wash hands thoroughly,
- tilt head back,
- pull lower lid out to make a pouch,
- squeeze thin strip of ointment or gel into pouch, lifting tube away from eye to detach strip,
- close eye gently and roll eyeball in all directions.
- You may gently massage eye (*use clean tissue*) to distribute ointment.

Never touch eye dropper or applicator to eye, face, or hands!

When using eyewashes

- use plenty of solution.
- thoroughly clean eyewash cup before reusing.