

# Medicines Optimisation

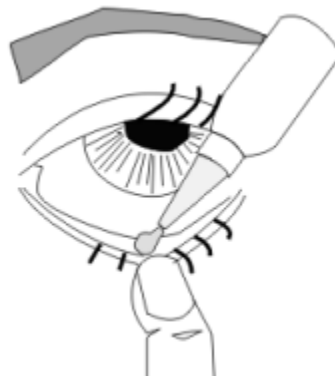
## Best Practice Guidance for Care Homes – *Bulletin 6*

### Eye Drops and Ointment

#### What are Eye Drops/ointment?

Eye drops/ointment are used to treat several conditions. The active ingredient varies depending on the condition being treated (the indication). Common types of eye drops/ointment include antihistamine, antibiotic, steroid or anaesthetic, although there are many more. Eye drops/ointments/sprays can also be used as lubricants if a patient is suffering with dry eyes. Eye ointment has a thicker consistency so may have a longer effect, which can allow less frequency of administration.

#### Using eye drops/ointment<sup>1</sup>



- Encourage the resident to self-administer if appropriate. In this case they should sit or stand in front of a mirror and follow the procedure below (if carers are administering these products, they should also follow the procedure below)
- Wash hands.
- Take off the top of the bottle.
- Ask the resident to bend their head backwards and gently pull their lower eyelid down.
- Hold the dropper above one eye. Squeeze **one drop** into the pocket formed by gently pulling down the lower eyelid. Try not to touch the eye, eyelashes, or anything else with the dropper tip to keep it clean. If ointment, squeeze a thin line of ointment into the pocket formed.
- Let go of the eyelid and keep the eye closed for as long as possible (2-3 minutes at least) after application of the eye drop, with the head tilted down towards the floor.
- Press gently on the tear duct (inner corner of the eye) with one finger for a minute.
- Wipe away any liquid that falls on their cheek with a tissue.
- Repeat in the other eye if the drop is prescribed for both eyes.

**When two different eye drop preparations are used at the same time of day, wait for at least five minutes before putting the second drop into an eye. This stops the first drop from being diluted or washed away.**

## Some useful tips about eye drops/ointment for carers and residents?

- Keep the bottle closed in a cool, dark place (unless otherwise advised).
- Some eye drops/ointment must be stored in the fridge so make sure you read the box and instructions when you receive them from the Pharmacy.
- Do not let the dropper or dropper nozzle touch the eye, fingers, or any other surface. This is to keep it free from germs.
- Do not share drops/ointment between residents.
- Some eye drops come in disposable single dose units rather than in bottles.
- Residents may get a taste of eye drops in their mouth, or a feeling that the drops are running down their throat. This is normal as the tear duct which drains tears to the nose will also drain some of the eye drop. To prevent this, and to reduce any of the eye medication getting into the rest of their system, gently press on the tear duct (inner corner of the eye) for a minute or so after applying the drop.
- Some eye drops/ointment sting or irritate for a short while. Rarely, some people are allergic to some eye drops/ointment. Tell the GP if eye symptoms become worse after using eye drops/ointment.
- Eye drops/ointment may temporarily alter a resident's vision, this is more likely with ointment, therefore these should be administered at bedtime. Please observe as they may be at greater risk of falls for a short time afterwards,
- Residents should not wear contact lenses whilst using eye drops/ointment unless otherwise advised. (Some drugs and preservatives in eye drop/ointment can accumulate in soft contact lenses and may cause harm.)
- Keep the eye drops/ointment out of children's reach.

**There are devices available to help people who have difficulty squeezing the bottle accurately. Your pharmacist should be able to advise you on how to obtain one.**

## How long do eye drops/ointment last?

- Eye drops/ointment are sterile until the bottle is opened.
- When you open a new bottle of drops/ointment, it is good practice to **record the date of opening on the bottle.**
- Some eye drops/ointments are intended for short term use. For example, some courses of antibiotic drops/ointment are for 7 days only. Always check with the GP if you are unsure.
- Never use expired eye drops/ointment as they could be contaminated with dirt or bacteria and may spread infection.
- Always complete the prescribed course and then return any unused drops/ointment either to your pharmacy (residential homes) or via your clinical waste contractor (nursing homes).

### Discard Information

- Most drops/ointment must be discarded **28 days after opening** and therefore reordered every month.
- There are some exceptions to this rule – **please read** the instructions on the leaflet or box and reorder prescription accordingly.
- **Some eye drops can now be used for 90 days or 6 months – these should not be re-ordered monthly.**

## References

- 1 and 2 - 'How to use Eye Drops' <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/how-to-use-eye-drops#> (accessed 23.08.2023)  
3 – Information obtained from [www.scopeophthalmics.com/?ec=dry-eye-products](http://www.scopeophthalmics.com/?ec=dry-eye-products) (accessed 23.08.2023)

<b>Title</b>	Best Practice Guidance – eye drops
<b>Description of policy</b>	To inform healthcare professionals
<b>Scope</b>	Information for Care Homes
<b>Prepared by</b>	Medicines Optimisation Team
<b>Evidence base / Legislation</b>	Level of Evidence: <i>A. based on national research-based evidence and is considered best evidence</i> <b>B. mix of national and local consensus</b> <i>C. based on local good practice and consensus in the absence of national research based information.</i>
<b>Dissemination</b>	Is there any reason why any part of this document should not be available on the public website? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Approved by</b>	Medicines Optimisation Team
<b>Authorised by</b>	Medicines Optimisation Team
<b>Review date and by whom</b>	Medicines Optimisation Team May 2021 or following any change in legislation
<b>Date of issue</b>	May 2021

Version	Date	Author	Status	Comment
0.1	Dec 2014	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team <i>JC</i>	Draft	Discussed at SMT and some wording amendments made
1.0	Jan 2015	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team <i>JC/ SW</i>	final	Wording amendments implemented
2.0	Jan 2016	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team <i>JC/ SW</i>		Reviewed & references checked
2.1	April 2018	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team <i>SPC</i>	Draft	AGEM logos added. Reviewed and update contents. References checked. Ointment administration information added. Title changed to include ointment.
3.0	June 2018	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team	Final	Approved by Senior Team, June 18
3.1	October 2020	Medicines optimisation Team <i>AGEM. BLS</i>	Update	Vita-POS – change of name to Hylo-night. Updated expiry dates on 2 items reduced from 6 months to 90 days. References accessed.
3.1	April 2021	Medicines Optimisation Team <i>AGEM – STM discussion</i>	Update	Remove table showing specific eye drop brands and expiry date lengths, add generic statement to read PIL to find out discard information
4.0	May 2021	Medicines Optimisation Senior Team	Final	Approved Senior Team meeting April 2021
4.1	Aug 2023	Medicines Optimisation Team - <i>LE</i>	Final	Uploaded to new template only

