

How to use your eye drops and ointment

Most people with glaucoma are treated with eye drops. Used regularly as prescribed, they help lower the eye pressure to the right level for you, which reduces the risk of your eyesight becoming worse. Many people find it difficult to put eye drops in at first, and it is easy to forget to do it regularly. Glaucoma is usually a slow progressive condition that can ultimately result in impaired vision or even blindness, so it's important you take your drops as prescribed, unless your health care professional (HCP, that is doctor, nurse, orthoptist or optometrist) tells you to stop using them. Often, your drops are for life.

We have put this booklet together to help you. It tells you how to put drops in, and about different aids designed to make putting your own drops in easier. We have included other useful information for eye drop users and frequently asked questions.

You and your health care professionals

Eye drops work in different ways, and to help you use them most effectively please speak to your HCP or pharmacist to ensure that you understand why you are using your eye drops, how to use your eye drops and when to use your eye drops.

It is essential to use your eye drops in the way your HCP has advised to help treat your condition as effectively as possible.

You should read the leaflet that comes with the drops and also ask if there is anything to look out for when you use your drops, such as possible side effects.

What stops people using their eye drops as advised?

Eye drops are not the easiest of medicines to use and, whether you are putting them in yourself or into someone else's eyes, there are several reasons it can be tricky.

For instance, patients have reported feeling their arm/hand shaking whilst holding the bottle above their eye, or experiencing drops run down

their face and into their mouth, leaving an unpleasant taste. Some people worry the drops will have other effects on their health – this can happen but it is rare and, if it does happen, the drops can be changed.

Here are the main reasons people have difficulty using the drops as advised:

- Physical difficulty – cannot keep the hand still, cannot keep eyes open, drop misses their eyes; or cannot open or squeeze the bottle. Conditions such as arthritis can make this worse.
- Forget, or forget to take drops when out and about or at work
- Run out of drops
- Cannot collect the drops or the prescription
- Not sure which drops or how many drops
- Too many drops to put in at once
- Cannot read the drop label or instructions
- Worries about side effects or don't understand the need to take them
- Don't think the drops are working
- Unpleasant taste
- Worried about touching the eye with the bottle tip.

For all of these problems, there are things that can help – ask your HCP to help work out what can make things easier, whether that's organising a reminder for you when you forget or some advice in the clinic showing you the best way to put drops in.

How should I use my eye drops? A step by step guide

There are various ways to put drops in your eye and you will need to decide which is best for you.

1. Check the expiry date on the eye drop bottle and shake if required. (If your drops need to be shaken it will say on the bottle or in the leaflet that comes with drop).
2. Wash your hands before opening the bottle.
3. Sit down, in front of a mirror if that helps, and tilt your head back, or lie down with one pillow.
4. Pull down the lower eyelid with a finger of one hand.
5. Look up and with the other hand squeeze the bottle and let the drop fall into the gap between your eye and the lower lid. Do not let the tip of the bottle touch your eye, eyelashes or eyelid.
6. Close your eye gently and press softly on the inside corner of the eye, by the nose, with a finger for one minute. This will help to keep the drop in your eye where it is needed rather than drain out through the tear duct into your throat and be swallowed. This is not usually harmful but it reduces any bad taste and the potential for side effect problems. Doctors call this “punctal occlusion” meaning blocking the opening of the tear duct.
7. Wait five minutes, or according to medical advice, before putting a different drop into the same eye, to prevent the first being washed away
8. Repeat with the other eye if necessary.

It is important to ensure that you position your eye drop bottle accurately over your eye at a safe distance and angle so the whole drop falls into the eye. This also helps ensure you don't damage your eye surface or contaminate the nozzle from touching your eye or surrounding skin. This can all take practice.

It is sometimes easier to hold the eye drop bottle horizontally in your hand and place the screw part of the bottle on the bridge of your nose or on your forehead. Look upwards and squeeze the bottle gently. The drop should fall into the eye. If it doesn't it will be in the corner next to your nose and it will run into the eye if you turn your head slightly.

Resting the bottle on the bridge of the nose



Resting the bottle on the forehead / eyebrow



Using a mirror



One handed



Lying down



Tear duct closure



Patients also like using the 'wrist-knuckle' technique to help make putting in eye drops easier and safer.

Wrist-knuckle technique

1. Check the expiry date on your eye drop bottle and shake if required.
2. Wash your hands before opening the bottle.
3. Sit down, in front of a mirror if that helps, and tilt your head back, or lie down.
4. Make a fist with one hand and use your knuckles to pull your lower eyelid down. Place your other hand with the eye drop bottle onto your knuckles.
5. Look up and squeeze one drop into your lower eyelid, making sure the nozzle does not touch your eye, eyelashes or eyelid.
6. Close your eye gently and press softly on the inside corner of the eye, by the nose, with a finger for one minute.
7. Wait five minutes, or according to medical advice, before putting a different drop into the same eye, to prevent the first being washed away.
8. Repeat with the other eye if necessary.



Wrist-knuckle technique

Compliance aids

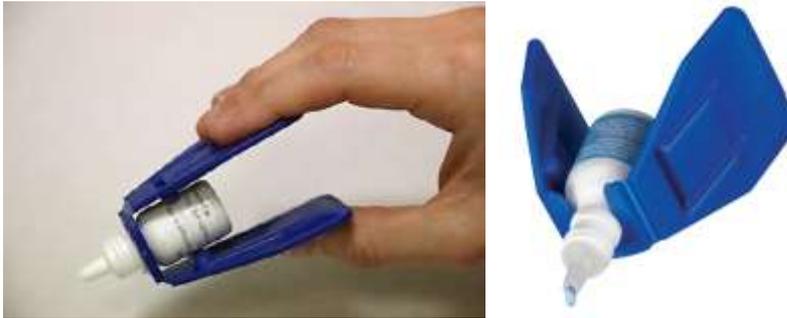
If these techniques are difficult for you to follow, there are several gadgets available called compliance aids, which can help make putting in drops easier. Compliance aids may be available, from your clinic or from the hospital pharmacy. Some compliance aids are available via prescription from your GP or are available to buy from various mobility outlets and the International Glaucoma Association website: www.glaucoma-association.com. Ask your HCP or pharmacist for help to understand what aids are available and get them to show you how to use.

1. Autodrop®



- Positions over the eye for accurate application of drops
- For all eye drop bottles
- Not available via GP NHS prescription

2. Autosqueeze®



- Positions over the eye for accurate application of drops
- Designed to make it easier to squeeze the bottle
- For all eye drop bottles
- Not available via GP NHS prescription

3. ComplEye®



- Positions over the eye for accurate application of drops
- For use with Hylotears® and Hyloforte® bottles
- Available via GP NHS prescription

4. Eyot – Alcon Eyot®



- For accurate positioning of eye drops; ideal for people who have difficulty squeezing the bottle

- For use with Alcon bottles such as Travatan® and Duotrav® eye drop bottles
- Not available via GP NHS prescription

5. Eyot - Thea Eyot®



- For accurate positioning and easier grip control
- Designed to make it easier to squeeze the eye drop out □ For use with single-dose eye drops
- Not available via GP NHS prescription

6. Opticare®



- Positions over the eye for accurate application of drops
- Designed to make it easier to squeeze the bottle
- For all round 2.5ml - 15mls eye drop bottles
- There are black and grey rubber collars which come with the Opticare for bottles which may need adjustment to fit
- Available via GP NHS prescription

7. Opticare Arthro®



- Positions over the eye for accurate application of drops
- Designed to help those who suffer from severe arthritis or limited hand or shoulder movement to squeeze the bottle
- Very flexible and helpful for carers and relatives who put the drops in
- For most round bottles
- Comes in two sizes: Size 5 for 2.5ml and 5ml bottles Size 10 for 10ml and 15ml bottles
- Available via GP NHS prescription

8. Rubber eye drop bottle opener



- Helps open the lid of the bottle
- For use with most eye drop bottles
- Not available via GP NHS prescription Available to buy from various mobility outlets

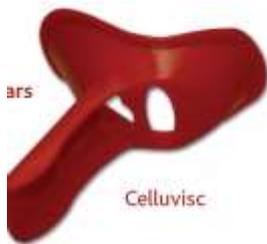
For single use eye drops

1 Drop Aid® Single Dose



- For accurate positioning and easier grip control
- Designed to make it easier to squeeze the eye drop out
- For use with single-dose eye drops
- Not available via GP NHS prescription

2. The Celluvisc Compliance Aid,



- originally designed for artificial tears
- It is made for accurate positioning and easier grip control.

Eye ointment

Using eye ointment is very similar to using eye drops, and most of the information about using ointment is exactly the same as for eye drops.

You can use the same techniques as for drop and the main difference are:

1. when you use the ointment, pull down the lower lid and squeeze about 1cm of the ointment along the inside of the lower eyelid, making sure the nozzle does not touch the eye, eyelashes or eyelid.
2. Close your eye for a moment, then blink a few times to spread the ointment around the inside of the eye. You do not have to press on the inner corner of the eyelid, like you need to with drops.

3. If you are using an eye ointment at the same time as your eye drop, always use your eye drop first and leave a five minute gap before using the ointment.

What to expect when you use drops

Please be aware that some eye drops may sting or irritate for a short while after putting them in, but please do let a pharmacist or HCP know if symptoms become worse or if you experience any other side effects.

Keeping drops and ointment safely

- Most drops are stored at ordinary room temperature (not next to a radiator or in direct sunlight) but some need to be kept in a fridge before the bottles are opened.
- Look at the leaflet that comes with your drops or check with your pharmacist to be sure you know the correct way to store your drops or ointment. Store them as instructed.
- If you have difficulty knowing whether a drop has gone into your eye, you can try keeping the bottle in the fridge (not the freezer). You will then feel the coldness of the drop going into your eye. However, always be sure to check in the patient information leaflet or with your pharmacist that your drops can safely be stored this way, before doing this.
- Most bottles last 28 days once the bottle is open, but this can vary for different treatments, so always check to ensure how long they will last whilst still safe to use.
- Don't continue to use a bottle for more than a month after it has been opened or after the expiry date if this is sooner. This is to ensure they are not contaminated with bacteria or do not become less effective.
- It is a good idea to make a note of when you open the bottle on the label so you know when it will expire and when need to order a replacement bottle from the GP/pharmacy.
- Order further supplies from your GP before your bottle has finished. This will ensure that you do not run out of drops. Please

note: most hospitals do not issue repeat prescriptions and you need to request repeats from your GP.

- Ask your GP for 3 months repeat prescription.
- Hand in any unused or expired bottles to your pharmacy.
- Some single dose unit drops may be packaged within a sachet or pouch inside the box and, when the seal is open, all the drops within the sachet/pouch have a limited expiry date, for example seven days. Look at the leaflet that comes with your drops or check with your pharmacist to be sure you know the correct expiry once opened.
- Single dose unit eye drops should be used once only and discarded.
- Sometimes you might need to keep your drops cool when the weather is hot, for instance if you are travelling or out for the day. Keep your drops in a cool place out of the light. A cool wallet, available from the IGA, helps to keep the drops cool, for up to 45 hours.
- Store eye drops and all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.

Top tips

- Never share your eye drops with anyone else.
- Eye drop dispensers are for individual use – do not share them with other people.
- Wash your dispenser regularly in warm soapy water.
- Never touch the nozzle of the dropper bottle and avoid contact with the eye or skin.
- Try to administer the right number of drops (usually 1-2 drops) or amount of ointment (usually 1cm). Don't squeeze the bottle too hard or too much comes out and gets wasted.
- If you feel that the drop may have missed your eye, you can safely try again immediately. Any excess volume will simply run out of your eye and will not cause harm to your eye.
- Always check you have been given the right drops when you receive them.

Contact lenses

If you use contact lenses, never put a drop or ointment in your eye whilst wearing a lens unless specifically advised by your HCP that this is alright. Allow 15 minutes after using your drops before inserting a lens. You might need to wait longer if using ointment – ask your HCP.

Ideally contact lens wearers should avoid using eye drops which contain preservatives. Please speak to your doctor or pharmacist about alternative preservative free eye drops.

Getting into the routine

Damage to vision caused by glaucoma is permanent and can't be reversed. However, treatment can prevent or reduce any future damage by ensuring that the pressure in your eye doesn't get too high. It is essential to use your eye drops regularly as prescribed if you want to preserve your eyesight.

So you don't forget to put your drops in, it's worth getting into a routine and sticking to it. The most important thing is to settle on a routine you can manage and remember every day.

- Use your eye drops at the same time each day.
- If you use a drop more than once a day, try to ensure the times when you put them as evenly spaced out throughout the day as possible. For example, if they go in twice a day, aim for 12 hours apart. This helps to ensure that the drop does not wear off before the next dose is due, and so will help stabilise your eye pressures and treatment plan. But do not fret about being 5, 10 or even 30 minutes out.
- Unless the bottle needs to be stored in the fridge, you could keep it by your toothbrush so you are reminded when you brush your teeth.
- Some people find it helpful to make a chart with the days of the week on it where they can tick off every time they use their drops. There is a drop calendar available from the IGA website or helpline.
- You can also set a reminder/alarm on your mobile phone.

If you use different types of drops:

- Use drops in the same order each time, for example by colour or by bottle size, to reduce the possibility of making a mistake.
- If you have difficulty telling the different bottles apart, it may be useful to use coloured stickers, larger labels or elastic bands around the bottles to distinguish them.

Where can I get more help and information?

You can get help and advice from your own HCP, your hospital pharmacist, your GP and your local pharmacist. Do not be afraid to speak to your own doctor, nurse or optometrist in the eye clinic and ask for advice or a tutorial on using your drops.

You can also get lots of advice and information on all aspects of glaucoma and glaucoma medication from the IGA the International Glaucoma Association www.glaucoma-association.com or contact the IGA Sightline on 01223 648170. And you might be interested to take a look at Moorfields website which has information leaflets on glaucoma and medications and a page about using drops at www.moorfields.nhs/Knowyourdrops.