

Patient information factsheet

Atropine occlusion (eye drops)

We have given you this factsheet because your child has been diagnosed with a lazy eye, and you have been given atropine eye drops to help improve the vision. It explains what atropine eye drops are, how to use them, and any side effects that your child may experience. We hope that it answers some of the questions you may have. If you or your child have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team or contact us using the details at the end of the factsheet.

It is important that you tell us if your child:

- is allergic to any medication
- has high blood pressure
- has a heart condition

Atropine eye drops may not be suitable for your child.

What are atropine eye drops?

Atropine drops are used to improve the vision in a lazy eye. They temporarily dilate (widen) the pupil and blur the vision in the better eye so that your child is encouraged to use the weaker eye.

When do we use the drops?

You should only use the drops on weekends. Put one drop into the better eye once on Saturdays and once on Sundays.

How do we get the drops?

The drops come in small, single-use plastic bottles called minims. You should have two bottles (one for Saturday and one for Sunday) for each weekend that you are using the drops. We will give you eight bottles to use over the first four weekends, and we will then ask your GP to give you prescriptions for more atropine eye drops.

Please contact us using the details at the end of the factsheet if you have any problems getting the drops.

How long should my child use the drops for?

It usually takes several months of using the drops at weekends to treat the vision in the lazy eye. The orthoptist will monitor your child's vision carefully and discuss when you should stop using the drops.

How long do the effects last?

It can take up to two weeks for the effects of the drops to wear off completely. Your child will have blurred vision in one eye and will be sensitive to light in one eye while using the drops.

How often will my child be seen in hospital?

The orthoptist will review your child one month after they start the drops, and then every two months after this. You can contact us between appointments if you have any concerns.

Can my child continue normal activities while using the drops?

Yes, but they will have blurred vision. You should inform your child's school, nursery and other carers about these effects. Detailed visual activities (such as reading, writing, using a computer, or watching TV) help stimulate use of the lazy eye.

You will need to take extra care to avoid accidents. Each child is different, but it is usually best to avoid sports while the vision is blurred. Your child may find it helpful to wear a hat or sunglasses outside in bright weather.

How to use atropine eye drops

Do not give your child atropine eye drops if they have a fever or are allergic to atropine sulphate.

You should only use the drops on weekends. Put one drop into the better eye once on Saturdays and once on Sundays, following the steps below.

1. Before you start, double check which eye you should be putting the drop into.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Ask your child to lie down, or to sit on another adult's lap with their head tilted back onto the adult's arm.
4. Shake the minim bottle and take the cap off.
5. Gently open the eyelid and put one drop in the centre of the inside of the lower eyelid. Do not let the bottle touch the eye.
6. If it is difficult to open the eye, you can leave the lids closed and place the drop where the upper and lower eyelids meet in the centre of the eye. Keep your child lying down and open their eye, the drop should trickle into the eye.
7. Close the eye and gently press your finger against the inner corner of the eye for at least one minute. This blocks the duct that runs from the eye into the nose and helps to keep the drop in the eye.
8. Even if you suspect that the drop did not get into the eye, do not give your child an additional drop, but wait until the next drop is due.
9. Wipe away any excess from the face with a clean tissue.
10. Wash your hands afterwards.
11. Replace the lid on the minim bottle and throw away the minim, even if you have not used all the drops in it. Dispose of it in the outside rubbish bin, so that children cannot get hold of it. Do not throw the drops in the rubbish bin in the house or down the toilet.
12. Wash your hands again.

Once you have finished the course of atropine eye drops, please return any unused minims bottles to a pharmacy.

Please note that atropine is poisonous if swallowed. Make sure that you only use the eye drops as prescribed and keep them out of the reach of children.

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Storing the drops

Do:

- store the drops safely out of the reach of children
- store the drops at a temperature less than 25°C (room temperature), in a dry place away from strong light

Do **not**:

- place the drops near food or drink

Side effects

Stop the drops immediately and contact the orthoptic department if your child has:

- itchy or swollen eyelids
- red, watering eyes
- fewer tears
- a feeling of pressure inside the eye
- dryness of the skin or mouth
- skin rashes
- difficulty swallowing
- a fever
- flushing of the face
- restlessness, excitement or irritability
- an irregular heartbeat

Contact eye casualty using the details at the end of the factsheet if you have difficulty getting through to the orthoptic department or if it is out of hours.

Contact us

Orthoptic department

Telephone: **023 8120 4789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)

Eye casualty

Telephone triage line: **023 8120 6592**

Monday to Friday, 8am to 7.30pm

Weekends and bank holidays, 8am to 6pm

Southampton General Hospital pharmacy

Telephone: **023 8120 4161**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5pm

Wednesday, 9.30am to 5pm

Saturday and Sunday, 9am to midday

If your child needs to see a doctor while their pupil is still large, for example if they have an accident, you should let the doctor know that they have had dilating eye drops.

Useful links

For further information on lazy eyes, you can visit the squint clinic website.

www.squintclinic.com

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**