

THERAPEUTIC MEDICINES USED IN OPTOMETRY

Q Why do optometrists use therapeutic medicines?

A Every day, optometrists see a variety of eye problems. Often these problems can be fixed with spectacles, better lighting or eye exercises but sometimes, therapeutic management with medicines are required. These medicines are usually in the form of eye-drops. They include antibiotics, antivirals and antifungals to fight infections; anti-inflammatories; eye-drops to reduce pressure inside the eye and non medicated lubricants. Some of the eye-drops are available over-the-counter but most require a prescription from your optometrist.



Q What can my optometrist treat?

A Your optometrist can use ocular therapeutic medications to manage a wide range of eye conditions, including:

- Dry eye
- Blepharitis (a type of eyelid inflammation)
- Conjunctivitis
- Allergic eye condition
- Complications related to contact lens wear
- Corneal disorders and infections
- Ocular inflammation including episcleritis and uveitis
- Inflamed pterygium
- Surface trauma and injuries of the eye.

In some states optometrists can also use ocular therapeutics as part of the management of glaucoma and for inflammatory disorders inside the eye.

Q Should I go to my GP instead?

A Both your general medical practitioner and your optometrist are able to prescribe ocular therapeutic medications.

Q How much will treatment cost?

A The cost of eye-drops varies. If you hold a pension card, health care card or Veterans' Affairs card, you may be eligible to have your medications subsidised by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The level of subsidy for these drugs and the list of drugs covered by these schemes change frequently. Your optometrist or pharmacist can advise you on your level of cover and out-of-



Q What happens if I don't take my medication?

A Dosage instructions are specifically set for maximum effectiveness. Some eye-drops will have no effect unless used correctly. Some eye-drops also require a very specific schedule of decreasing dose and should not be stopped suddenly. You should adhere strictly to the dosage schedule advised by your optometrist and should not stop using the eye-drops unless your optometrist or doctor has advised you to do so.

Q Are there side-effects or risks?

A As with all medications, eye-drops can have some side effects. These range from a slight stinging sensation when you put the drops in your eye to more serious effects if the drops are not taken properly. Before prescribing therapeutic eye-drops your optometrist will ask you some questions to determine whether the eye-drops could interfere with your other medications or medical problems. It is important to tell your optometrist if you are taking any medications or if you are allergic to anything, including foods, and if you have had an unwanted reaction to any medication, in the past. You should also tell your optometrist if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.



Q Is the legislation different in each State and Territory?

A Yes. The types of ocular therapeutic medications that your optometrist can prescribe vary among States and Territories. Your optometrist can prescribe only eye-drops that are permitted to prescribe under the laws of their State or Territory.

Ask your optometrist for these related brochures

- Dry eye
- Eye safety
- Pterygium
- Glaucoma
- Blepharitis
- Conjunctivitis
- Safe contact lens wear
- Eye-drops and ointments

