

Therapeutic Medicines used in Optometry

Authored by Ieuan Rees

As optometrist, we see a variety of eye problems come through the practice every day. Often these problems can be fixed with spectacles, better lighting or eye exercises. Other times, therapeutic management with medications are required. These medications are usually in the form of eye drops. They include antibiotics, antivirals and antifungals to fight infections, anti-inflammatory 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.

Optometrists typically use these drops to treat the following

- Dry eye
- Blepharitis (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
- Help manage Glaucoma

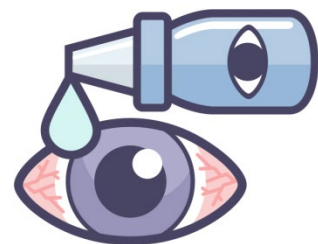


Treatments cost

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-pocket.

What happens if I don't take my medication?

The 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.



Are there side-effects or risks?

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 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.