

Atropine occlusion for amblyopia

This leaflet explains the use of atropine eye drops for the treatment of amblyopia in children (also known as atropine occlusion). If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you. -

What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia, also known as a 'lazy eye', means reduced vision in one eye. This is usually due to a squint (where the eyes are misaligned or crossed), astigmatism (a rugby shaped front to the eye) or one eye being more long or short sighted than the other.

What is atropine?

Atropine is a medicine that dilates (expands) the pupil (black part of the eye). This stops the eye from focusing close up, resulting in temporary blurred vision.

How does atropine work to treat amblyopia?

Atropine eye drops are instilled **into the good (non-lazy) eye** to blur the vision. This then encourages the child to use their lazy eye and so improve the vision in that eye.

My child wears glasses as well. Do they need to wear these at the same time?

Yes. It is vital that children wear their glasses; the lazy eye will not improve as it should if they do not.

Will atropine improve my child's squint?

No. Atropine drops will only aim to improve the vision in the lazy eye.

Are there any reasons not to use atropine drops?

Atropine drops are not suitable for everyone. For example they should not be used in children with inflammation of the eye, heart abnormalities or a high temperature (fever). Your child will be reviewed and this treatment will only be recommended if it is suitable for them.

Taking an unlicensed medicine

Atropine is not licensed to treat Amblyopia but has been used in this way since the early 1950s.

The leaflet, **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Alternatively you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How long do the effects of atropine last?

Your child's vision may remain blurred for several days (sometimes up to 10 days) and the pupil can remain dilated for up to 14 days.

Are there any side-effects of atropine?

Side-effects to atropine eye drops occur infrequently. If your child develops a red swollen eye, or shows unusual signs of irritability, headaches, rash or reddening of the skin, fever, dry mouth or sickness, stop the treatment and contact the clinic on the number below for advice.

Alternatively contact your GP or local healthcare provider outside of clinic hours.

Other precautions

Read the patient information leaflet that comes with the eye drops. Do not put the drops in your own eyes. The drops should be kept at room temperature and out of reach of children.

Atropine is poisonous if it is eaten. If you suspect this has occurred take your child immediately to the nearest Accident and Emergency department.

Please take unwanted or unused drops to a pharmacy, or bring them back to the clinic for disposal.

How often do I put a drop into my child's eye?

Before using the drops, ensure you wash your hands. Put one drop into your child's good eye **twice a week on the days advised by the clinic**, until your next appointment. You may find it easier to put the drops in when your child is asleep.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Use the eye drops as soon as you remember the missed dose. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue the regular dosing schedule. Do not use a double dose to make up for a missed one.

How will using the drops affect my child?

If your child attends school or nursery, it is important that their teacher knows that they are using eye drops to treat their lazy eye. Your child may need to hold their books closer and may find it easier if sitting facing away from a bright window. As atropine makes the pupil much larger, it means that your child may be more sensitive to light. It would therefore be sensible for your child to wear a sun hat or sunglasses in bright weather.

How often will my child need to come to hospital?

Usually we would see children undergoing atropine occlusion every month. It is **important that you tell our receptionist that your child is using atropine drops** if you have to cancel an appointment, so that we can ensure we see you as soon as possible.

Useful sources of information

www.squintclinic.com – the videos are very helpful

www.orthoptics.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the **Orthoptic department on 020 7188 4299**, and leave a message on our answer phone. We aim to get back to you within three working days. (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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