

# Dilating eye drops for children

**This leaflet is about dilating eye drops for children. The drops make the openings called the pupils in the eyes bigger when we examine them. If you have any more questions, please speak to the eye specialist caring for your child.**

## Why we need to use dilating eye drops

When your child comes to the eye clinic, we often need to make the pupils in their eyes bigger (dilate them). We can use eye drops to do this.

Eye drops allow us to:

- examine the back of your child's eyes
- check if there is any refractive error (when the eyes do not focus light correctly)
- decide if your child needs glasses

## How dilating eye drops feel

When we put the drops in your child's eyes, they can sting a little. However, the process is not painful for your child.

Our orthoptists (specialists in squints and eye movement problems) and other health professionals are experienced in giving eye drops to children. We make sure that the drops are put in effectively and have many different techniques to ease the discomfort.

## How long dilating eye drops take to work

It usually takes about 30 minutes for the eye drops to dilate the pupils (make them expand) fully. If your child's eyes are particularly dark, the process can take up to 1 hour.

## How dilating eye drops affect your child's vision

The eye drops can make your child's vision blurry and a little more sensitive to the light. It is sensible for your child to wear a cap or hat with a brim when we have put in the drops. This helps to protect their face from bright sunlight. On bright days, it might also be helpful to bring sunglasses for your child to wear after the appointment.

Your child can return to school after their appointment in the eye clinic. However, they may have some difficulty in reading or looking at a computer screen for a couple of hours. It is a good idea to explain this to their teacher.

## How long dilating eye drops last

The eye drops usually last between 4 to 6 hours. However, their effects can continue for up to 24 hours.

The drops wear off in 2 stages:

- First, the ability to focus on objects returns. This happens about 4 to 6 hours after we have put in the drops.
- Second, the size of the pupils returns to normal. This usually happens later on the same day. However, there is no need to be concerned if the pupils stay dilated (widened or enlarged) until the next day.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about dilating eye drops for children, please contact our eye department, **phone** 020 7188 4299 (please leave a message on the answerphone and we will call you back within 3 working days), **email** [gst-tr.paediatricophthalmologyenquiries@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.paediatricophthalmologyenquiries@nhs.net) (we reply to emails within 3 working days)

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk). To make a complaint, contact the patient resolution team **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto: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 contact the department where you have your appointment.

## NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers. They are supported by experienced nurses and paramedics, **phone** 111 (24 hours a day) **web** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. It can help you to take care of your child's health and wellbeing, **web** [www.nhs.uk](http://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 rely 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, please get in touch, **phone** 0800 731 0319 **email** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **web** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)



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