

**Patient
Information**

Your child's eye drops

Introduction

This leaflet explains why we use eye drops for some visits to the Eye Clinic. The leaflet also gives instructions on how to use them.

Why does my child need these eye drops?

You have been given some drops to put into your child's eyes before their eye test. This is because younger children are unable to do the sight test in the way an adult might (by comparing different lenses).

The effect of the drops is to temporarily relax the eye focusing muscles so that the optometrists can measure any long sightedness, short sightedness or astigmatism by an alternative method. They will do this by directing a light into your child's eyes, looking at the reflection and adjusting the lenses accordingly.

If the eye drops are not used the results can be variable and not as accurate.

How do the eye drops work?

The eye drops relax the focusing muscles in the eye so that we can accurately measure your child's prescription. The maximum effect is between 30 and 60 minutes after the drops have been put in and will wear off over the next 24 hours.

This can make the close up vision quite difficult for that time and often the distance vision is 'fuzzy'. If your child has spectacles, it will make this easier if they are worn as usual.

You will also notice that your child's pupils become dilated (enlarged). This is a side effect of the drops and happens sooner and lasts longer than the focusing effect. This can sometimes last for up to 36 hours. The pupil dilation will help the optometrist when examining the retina inside the eye. However, when the pupils are dilated it does mean that bright lights and sunshine can be uncomfortable.

For this reason, sunglasses or a hat with a peak for your child will be useful for going outside after the examination.

Reference No.

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Department

Ophthalmology

Review due

March 2028

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Frequently asked questions

Can my child return to school or nursery after the test?

This is fine as long as the teacher or carer is aware that your child will not be able to focus very well. Reading or concentrated writing tasks would also be difficult but most 'play' based activities for younger children should still be possible.

How should I put the drops in?

It may be helpful to have someone to help you insert the drops as unfortunately the drops do sting for a short while afterwards. This often makes it harder to insert the second drop. The drops are more likely to go in if your child's head is laid back and the eyelids held gently open. An additional helper may be able to squeeze the drop in or help with keeping your child still for a few seconds.

When should I put the drops in?

It is very important that the drops have definitely gone in both eyes at least 30 minutes before the appointment time.

We suggest that you allow 50 minutes in case there are some difficulties on the first attempt. If you are not sure if you got both eye drops in properly then look at the pupils after 20 minutes. If one pupil is significantly bigger than the other then a second drop is needed for the eye with the smaller pupil. Do not give more than one extra drop unless you have been specifically asked to prior to the appointment.

What happens if I can't get the drops in?

If you are having problems with inserting the drops or wish to have some help then please make sure that you go to the appointment at least half an hour before your allotted time slot. On arrival, you must let a member of staff know that you need some help so that the optometrist can be told as soon as possible. If your child has the first appointment of the morning or afternoon (usually 9:00am and 2:00pm) there may be no one available to do this for you.

Patient Information

The appointment time slot is usually 25 minutes long. If the drops have not worked in time, you will miss your child's time slot and will need to either rebook another appointment or wait to see if the optometrist is able to fit you in later in the clinic. This is often only possible if there has been a cancellation or if another patient has failed to attend.

Contact information

If you have any queries, or you have lost the eye drops and need some to be sent to you or wish to have an optometrist call you back please contact the:

Optometry and Orthoptic Reception

Tel: 0300 422 3190

Monday, Tuesday Wednesday and Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm

Thursday, 8:00am to 12:00pm

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85