Atropine treatment for a lazy eye

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Parents

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What are atropine eye drops?

Atropine eye drops or ointment can be used to treat a lazy eye (amblyopia). Atropine treatment is usually used when wearing an eye patch has not helped or if your child will not wear the patch. Sometimes a patch and atropine are used together.

How do they work?

Atropine is put into the good eye. It works by blurring the vision in this eye (especially when viewing close objects). This makes the weaker eye work harder. If your child wears glasses, your eye specialist may also recommend changing the strength of the lens in front of your child's good eye to blur the vision even more.

What are the effects of atropine?

Atropine has 2 effects when put into the eye:

- It makes the central black part of the eye bigger (dilates the pupil).
- It stops the eye from focusing properly, which blurs the vision, especially for close-up.

Are there any side effects?

Most children do not have any problems with atropine but please read this advice carefully:

- Ask your eye specialist or GP before using atropine if your child suffers from heart problems or has a high temperature.
- Tell your eye specialist or pharmacist if your child is taking any other medication.
- The dilated pupil will allow more light into the eye and so may make your child more sensitive to light. Wearing a sunhat or sunglasses may help if they seem bothered by this.
- Your child may find it a bit uncomfortable when the atropine is first put into the eye, although it does not sting. If this continues and you are concerned, please speak to your eye specialist or GP.

- Your child's vision will not be as good as usual whilst using atropine. Please make sure all adults involved in your child's care know about this. Let their school know that they may need to hold things closer and that their writing may not be as good as usual.
- If your child needs to see any other health specialists whilst having atropine treatment, please make sure that they are aware that you are using atropine.
- If your child has a squint (turn in the eye), you may notice that the squint swaps between the eyes. This is a sign that vision may have started to improve. If the squint swaps into the other eye all the time, you should contact the Orthoptic department. We may need to see you sooner at an appointment.

Stop using atropine right away and get medical advice if your child:

- **becomes hot or irritable,**
- **has a rash,**
- **has sore throat,**
- **has headache,**
- **feels sick or is sick,**
- **has difficulty going to the toilet (if this is a new problem).**

How often should I use the atropine?

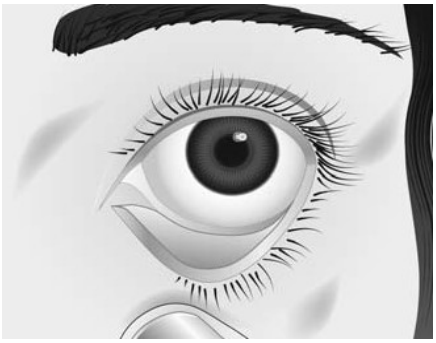
Your eye specialist will give you instructions on how to use atropine. It is a good idea to use it in the morning for the first day or two to make it easier to watch out for any side effects. After that it can be used at whatever time is most convenient. You may find it easier to put it in whilst your child is asleep.

How long do the effects last?

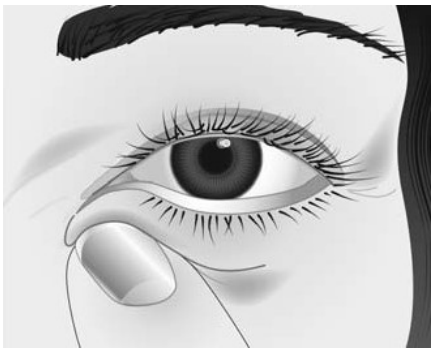
The effect is different from child to child. The blurred vision caused by the atropine can last for around 7 days, and the pupil may stay dilated for up to 14 days.

How should I put the atropine drops or ointment in?

1. Wash your hands really well.
2. With young children it may be easier to have them lying down or leaning back and held by another adult.
3. Gently pull down the lower lid of the good eye, as shown.
4. Make sure the dropper or tube does not touch any part of the eye.
5. Put 1 drop of atropine or squeeze a small amount of ointment (about the size of a match head) into the area between the lower eyelid and the eyeball.



6. Release the eyelid.
7. If using atropine drops (rather than ointment) press gently on the inner corner of the eye for about 1 minute, as shown. This will help to stop the solution draining away into the nose and being swallowed.



8. Always wash your hands and your child's hands after using atropine. It is important not to get any in the mouth or accidentally rubbed into your own eyes.
9. If you are prescribed "Minim" eye drops, these are single-use and therefore must be disposed of straight away after use. If you are given a larger bottle of atropine eye drops (or a tube of ointment) instead of "Minims", it must not be used for more than 4 weeks after being opened.

Follow-up appointments

Your child will need to come in for a review every 4 to 6 weeks whilst taking the atropine drops. Your child must attend these appointments. If you cannot attend the appointment, then please speak to a member of the Orthoptic Department and let a clinician know that your child is having treatment with atropine eye drops. This is so your next appointment can be booked with this in mind.

If you cannot regularly attend the appointment, treatment may need to be stopped temporarily until you can attend regularly.

It is important that you:

- Do not use atropine after the expiry date on the packet.
- Store the atropine upright in a dry place, away from strong sunlight and below 25ºC (that is at normal room temperature).
- Contact the orthoptic department and speak to an orthoptist if you miss an appointment as you should not continue to use atropine without the vision being monitored.
- Contact your GP for a repeat prescription before you run out of atropine. Sometimes it can be difficult to get quickly.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

Warning: Atropine is poisonous if taken by mouth.

Questions

If you have any other questions about your child's eye condition, or about atropine, just ask your eye specialist when you visit the hospital.

Please let us know if you cannot keep your appointment. If you do not attend an appointment Trust policy is that you should be discharged.

Orthoptic Department, Leicester Royal Infirmary: **0116 258 5277**

More information

For more information about atropine occlusion, or to find out more about what an orthoptist does, please have a look at the British and Irish Orthoptic society website: www.orthoptics.org.uk

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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