

Eye drops/ointments

Overview

Eye drops or ointments are often used to treat an eye infection, glaucoma, raised eye pressure or dry eyes. Eye drops often have a short expiry once they are opened and some (but not all) need to be stored in the fridge.

Process

1. Perform hand hygiene and put on disposable gloves
2. Ask the person to sit back with the neck slightly extended, or lie down
3. Ask the patient to look at the ceiling and carefully pull the skin below the eye down
4. Holding the eye dropper 1–2 cm above the eye, instil one drop into the outer 1/3 of the eye. If using an ointment apply a thin ribbon of ointment evenly along the inner edge of the lower eyelid and
5. Ask the person to close their eyes and keep them closed for 1–2 minutes.
6. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene

Risk/Considerations

- ⚠ If the person is using more than one ointment or drop the order and timing in which they go in is important generally use drops before ointments and allow 5 mins between each medication to prevent mixing and dilution.
- ⚠ The eye may need to be cleaned before putting in the drops, this should be done by using a sterile sodium chloride solution and a non-linting pad. The eye should be cleansed from the inner corner (near the nose) outwards to reduce the risk of contamination and infection
- ⚠ Contact lenses, if worn should be removed before instilling eye drops
- ⚠ Eye ointments can blur vision for a few minutes after they have been put in.
- ⚠ Gently pressing against the inner corner of the eye with your finger (over the tear duct) for 1–2 minutes increases the effectiveness of the eye drop and helps reduce the amount of medicine that is absorbed.