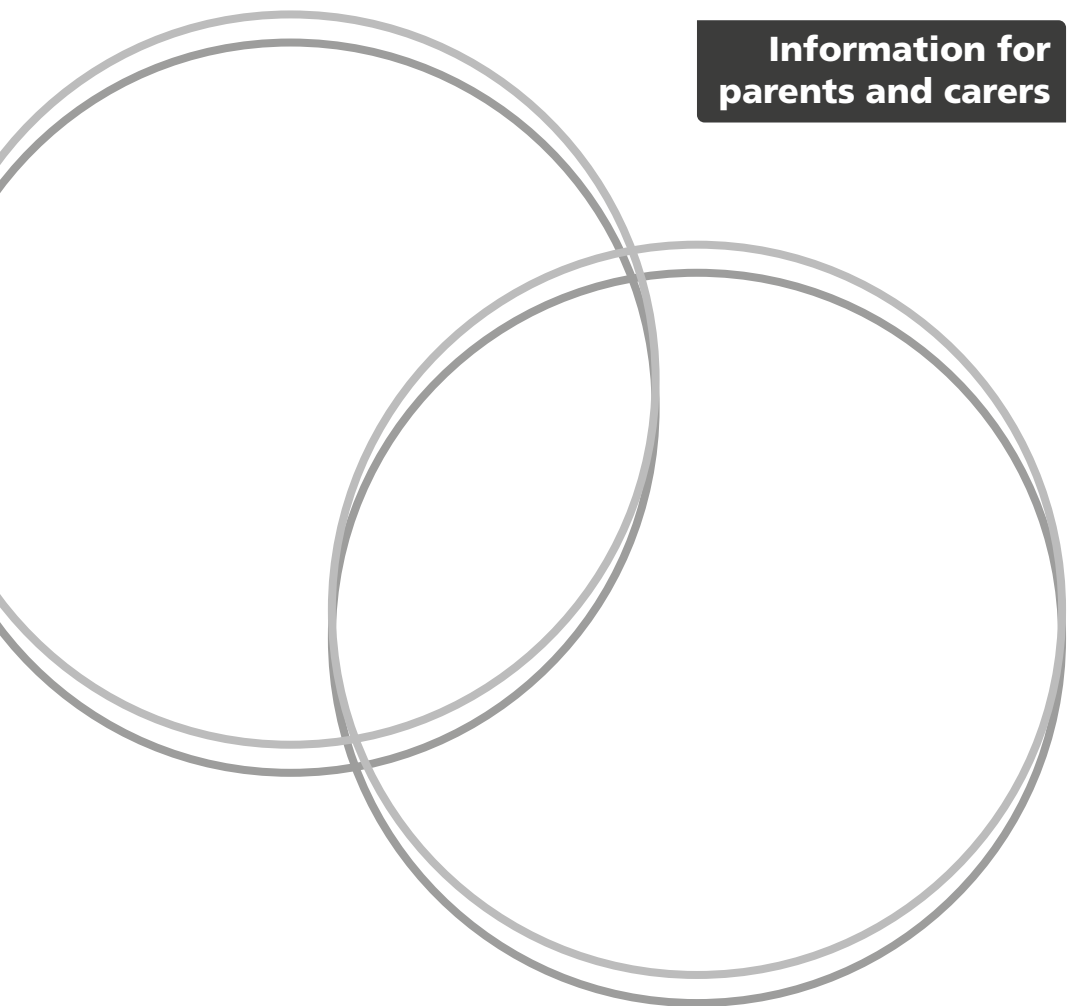




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

A Guide to Using Atropine Eye Drops for the Treatment of Amblyopia

**Information for
parents and carers**



This leaflet explains how amblyopia (also known as 'lazy eye') can be treated with Atropine eye drops. It explains how to use the drops, what side effects they may have and what to do if you notice any side effects.

Amblyopia is usually treated with occlusion (which means covering one eye), using a fabric or sticky patch. Not all children like this form of occlusion so Atropine eye drops can be used instead. We have a separate leaflet explaining amblyopia in more detail. Please ask the Orthoptist at your appointment for a copy.

How does Atropine work?

Atropine works by relaxing the muscle that is used to focus in your child's stronger eye. This makes it harder for the eye to focus on things close up and makes everything up close appear blurry. This encourages your child's weaker eye to take over and work harder, and over time can improve the vision of this eye. It also relaxes the pupil (the black part of the eye).

My child wears glasses, should they continue to wear them when using Atropine?

Yes. It is important that your child continues to wear their glasses to give their weaker eye the best chance to improve.

Where do I get the Atropine from?

The Orthoptist will have discussed the use of Atropine with you at your child's appointment and confirmed you are happy to use it. A prescription will be written by the Ophthalmologist (eye doctor) for you to take to the hospital pharmacy. When you run out, and if the treatment is to be continued, another prescription will be given to you when your child next comes for an appointment at the Eye Hospital.

How do I use Atropine?

Before using for the first time, it is important to read the patient information leaflet included in the box the drops come in. The drops are supplied in single dose squeeze containers called minims. They should be used once a day at the weekend only, so just Saturdays and Sundays. A new minim must be used each time and be **put in your child's strongest, best seeing eye**. They should not sting.

The following instructions should be followed each time:

- 1.** Always wash your hands and your child's hands before using the drops.
- 2.** Twist off the top of the minim.
- 3.** Gently pull down your child's lower eyelid with your finger.
- 4.** Avoid touching any part of your child's eye with the minim.
- 5.** Squeeze the minim to release one drop of Atropine into the lower eyelid avoiding the corner of the eye and then release the eyelid.
- 6.** Gently press on the skin underneath the inner corner of the eye for up to one minute. This helps to block the tear duct so that the drop doesn't drain into the nose, reducing the chance of the drop being swallowed.
- 7.** Replace the lid and dispose of the minim in your normal household rubbish.
- 8.** Wash your hands again so that you don't accidentally get any Atropine in your own eyes.

What are the side effects of Atropine?

Atropine relaxes the pupil muscle so that it no longer reacts to light. Normally in bright light conditions, the pupil will constrict (become smaller) but once the Atropine has taken effect, the pupil remains dilated (large). Your child might become sensitive to light or complain of glare. Your child might be more comfortable in a wide-brimmed hat or sunglasses in sunny weather. Once the treatment is stopped, it takes around 2 to 3 weeks for the blurring and dilation to completely wear off.

Very occasionally, there may be side effects to using Atropine. These include:

- Itchy or swollen eyes
- Hot, dry skin
- A fever (a temperature over 38 degrees celsius)
- Dry mouth
- Sickness
- Flushing or redness of the face, especially the cheeks
- Being restless or hyperactive
- Being irritable.

If your child develops any of these symptoms after using Atropine, stop using the drops and seek medical advice immediately. You can contact the Eye Hospital on **01865 234 567** and select the option for the Orthoptic Department available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm or ring NHS 111 at any time for advice.

Atropine should never be used if your child has a heart condition, so this treatment is not suitable for them.

Don't use Atropine if your child has a fever; restart when they are feeling better.

If you miss an appointment, do not continue to use the Atropine until your child has been reviewed. It should only be used under close medical supervision.

If your child needs medical or dental treatment whilst using Atropine, please inform the medical/dental professional looking after them about the Atropine treatment so they understand why the pupil is dilated. You should also inform your child's school, nursery or childminder/carer in case they need medical attention when you are not with them.

Storing Atropine

The minims should be stored out of direct sunlight, in a dry place, at room temperature and should be kept out of reach of children. Atropine can be poisonous if swallowed.

Do not use the drops after their expiry date; this is printed on the box and the packet containing the minim written as "EXP. 01 2023" (January 2023) for example. They must not be given to anyone else.

How long will my child need to use Atropine?

This depends on how poor their vision is before starting treatment and how quickly the vision in the weaker eye improves. This varies from child to child. Generally, we would continue to recommend using Atropine until the difference between the two eyes is as little as possible (one line difference or less in the vision testing book used by the Orthoptist) or the vision does not improve for 2 to 3 months despite good compliance with the treatment.

How to contact us

If you have any **non-urgent** concerns or questions, please contact the Eye Hospital.

Telephone: **01865 234 567** and select the option for the Orthoptic Department

(8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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