

Derbyshire Medicines Management, Prescribing and Guidelines
DERBYSHIRE PRIMARY CARE FORMULARY

Chapter 11: Eye

Updated: September 2024

The following prescribing guideline is relevant to the eye chapter and can be found [here](#)

- Dry eye prescribing
- Guideline for the medical treatment of glaucoma and ocular hypertension

11.0 Prescribing Note

Preservative-free (PF) formulations

PF preparations are usually more expensive than equivalent preservative containing alternatives. Only consider PF preparations when a patient shows signs of preservative hypersensitivity (preservative intolerance should be diagnosed by an ophthalmologist.); or signs of preservative toxicity (sometimes seen with multiple daily administrations); or when a patient wears soft contact lenses or daily disposable contact lenses and wearing glasses instead is not a viable option (see also 11.9), such as for long courses.

If PF formulation is warranted, proprietary preservative-free formulations (available as unit dose preparations or specifically designed containers) should be prescribed if at all possible (see also [glaucoma guideline](#)). Manufactured “specials” are unlicensed and almost invariably cost significantly more.

11.1 ADMINISTRATION OF DRUGS TO THE EYE

Refer to BNF <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/eye/>

11.2 CONTROL OF MICROBIAL CONTAMINATION

Refer to BNF <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/eye/>

11.3 ANTI-INFECTIVE EYE PREPARATIONS

11.3.1 ANTIBACTERIALS

For treatments of minor self-limiting conditions patients are encouraged to self-care. Infective conjunctivitis is usually self-limiting and settles without treatment within 1-2 weeks.

[Self-care](#) advice:

- **Clean** – gently clean away sticky discharge from your eyelid and lashes using a cotton wool pad soaked in boiled water that has been allowed to cool to a lukewarm temperature. Always use a new clean pad for each eye.
- **Soothe** – hold a cold wet face cloth on your closed eyes for a few minutes to provide cooling relief
- **Use lubricant eye drops** – these are available over the counter at pharmacies; they may help ease any soreness and stickiness in your eyes; always follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

Chloramphenicol	Eye drops 0.5% 10ml	<i>1st line drug, available OTC</i>
	Eye ointment 1% 4g	<i>Do not confuse with ear drops (5% and 10%) available OTC</i>

1. Chloramphenicol eye drops are available OTC from community pharmacies for adults and children aged 2 and over. If OTC treatment not appropriate, consider delayed prescription of topical antibiotics. People should re-consult if their symptoms persist for longer than 2 weeks.
2. Following a review of the available toxicological data and a calculation of daily exposure to boron from a typical dosing regimen, the MHRA have concluded that the balance between the benefits and risks of chloramphenicol eye drops containing borax or boric acid remains positive for children aged 0 to 2 years. Chloramphenicol eye drops can be **safely administered to children aged 0 to 2 years** where antibiotic eye drop treatment is indicated, but not purchased OTC for this age range. [MHRA, July 2021](#)

3. There are no particular signs or symptoms that will allow differentiation between a bacterial and a viral infection. An infective cause of conjunctivitis is more likely when:
 - There is a history of close contact with another affected person
 - Symptoms of upper respiratory tract infection are present
 - The eyes are glued together by discharge after sleep, or mucopurulent discharge is seen on examination
 - Conjunctivitis starts in one eye then spreads to the other
 - An enlarged lymph node in front of the ear is identified
4. It is not necessary to exclude a child from school or childcare if they have infective conjunctivitis, unless there is an outbreak of infective conjunctivitis. In the event of an outbreak, advice should be sought from the local PHE centre by the school or childcare centre – see PHE guidance on [Health protection in education and childcare settings](#).
5. Alternative treatment options to chloramphenicol include:
 - fusidic acid 1% eye drops- **GREY**, significantly more expensive than chloramphenicol eye drops. Recommended by NICE/PHE as alternative to chloramphenicol eye drops. Suitable for use in pregnancy.
 - azithromycin 1.5% eye drops- **GREY**, suitable for use in pregnancy
 - gentamicin 0.3% eye drops- **GREY**, significantly more expensive than chloramphenicol eye drops.

11.3.2 ANTIFUNGALS

Refer to specialist for further advice.

11.3.3 ANTIVIRALS

Urgently refer all patients with suspected herpes simplex to the hospital eye department. Only prescribe an antiviral eye preparation after specialist advice when same day secondary care appointment is not available.

Ganciclovir eye gel 0.15%

GREEN specialist recommendation

1. Aciclovir eye ointment is classified as **GREY** specialist recommendation, for use when ganciclovir is not suitable.

11.4.1 CORTICOSTEROIDS

Topical steroids should normally only be used on recommendation by an ophthalmologist for a defined length of time and should not normally be on repeat prescription. Steroid eye drops should not be prescribed for undiagnosed red eye.

1. Hydrocortisone sodium phosphate 3.35mg/ml PF eye drops (Softacort) is **GREY** consultant/ specialist initiation. For non-infectious allergic or inflammatory conjunctival disease, where a preservative-free eye drop is required beyond initial acute treatment. Specialist to communicate instructions for tapering and treatment length. Treatment over 14 days is off-licence.

11.4.2 OTHER ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PREPARATIONS

For treatments of self-limiting conditions such as allergic conjunctivitis patients are encouraged to [self-care](#).

1. Sodium cromoglicate is used prophylactically before the onset of predictable seasonal allergies such as hayfever and vernal kerato-conjunctivitis and can be purchased OTC.
2. Otrivine-Antistin (antazoline sulphate 0.5% + xylometazoline hydrochloride 0.05%) eye drops 10ml is used to relieve acute ocular symptoms of allergy and can be purchased OTC. Where the condition is systemic (e.g. in hayfever), oral antihistamines are often preferred.
3. Olopatadine 1mg/ml eye drops 5ml is classified as **GREEN** for seasonal allergic conjunctivitis as a third-line POM option.
4. Ciclosporin 0.1% eye drops (Ikervis) **GREY** after consultant/specialist initiation: as per NICE TA369 for the treatment of severe keratitis. Response to treatment should be reassessed at least every 6 months by the specialist.

11.5 MYDRIATICS AND CYCLOPLEGICS

Cyclopentolate hydrochloride eye drops 0.5%, 1%

Tropicamide eye drops 0.5%, 1%

1. Cyclopentolate reaches its maximal effect in 30-60 minutes. This lasts for about 40 minutes; complete recovery may take up to 24 hours.
2. Tropicamide produces rapid-onset mydriasis of short duration, reaching its maximal effect at 40-60 minutes. Recovery may take up to 6 hours.

11.6 TREATMENT OF GLAUCOMA

See [glaucoma treatment guideline](#).

This section is updated in line with the glaucoma guideline.

1st line treatment

Latanoprost eye drops 50mcg/ml

1st line prostaglandin analogue (PGA)

Betaxolol eye drops 0.25%, 0.5% 5ml

1st line beta-blocker (BB)

2nd line treatment (if IOP target not achieved)

Dorzolamide eye drops 2% 5ml

1st line carbonic anhydrase inhibitor (CAI)

Brimonidine eye drops 0.2% 5ml

1st line alpha2 agonist

Combination eye preparation

Latanoprost/timolol eye drops 0.5% 2.5ml

PGA+BB

Dorzolamide/timolol eye drops 2%/0.5% 5ml

CAI+ BB

Brinzolamide/brimonidine eye drops 2%/0.2% 5ml

CAI+alpha2

Prescribe as Simbrinza

Brimonidine/timolol eye drops 0.2%/0.5% 5ml

Alpha2+BB

Prescribe as Combigan

1. Combination preparations should only be considered if IOP not controlled on monotherapy.
2. If the patient is intolerant to preservatives the 1st line option is PF latanoprost.
3. Most glaucoma eye drops are now prescribed generically, with exception of some combination preparations. Where generic prescribing of eye drops is recommended due to cost-effectiveness, both primary and secondary care clinicians should follow this advice.

11.7 LOCAL ANAESTHETICS

No drug is recommended for this section.

11.8.1 TEAR DEFICIENCY, OCULAR LUBRICANTS, AND ASTRINGENTS

For treatments of minor conditions such as dry eyes/ sore tired eyes, patients are encouraged to [self-care](#) by measures such as good eyelid hygiene and avoidance of environmental factors. Lubricant eye treatments that consist of a range of drops, gels and ointments can be easily purchased over-the-counter.

DDICB recommends **Simple dry eye can be managed by directing the patient to [self-care](#) and to purchase dry eye lubricants over-the-counter.**

See dry eye prescribing [position statement](#).

This section is updated in line with the dry eye position statement.

Hypromellose (AaproMel 0.3%)

alternative cost-effective brands include Aaculose Hypromellose 0.3%, TearDew 0.3%

Polyvinyl alcohol (Liquifilm)

Carbomer 0.2% (Ocufresh Carbomer 0.2% Lubricating Eye Gel 10g)

NatPSA Potential contamination of some carbomer-containing lubricating eye products. **NatPSA** Certain batches of the following eye gels are subject to recall at present (see [FSN](#) for details): AACARB, **AACOMER 0.2%**, PUROPTICS. The MHRA are satisfied that carbomer-containing products available on the UK market are safe to use. Therefore all patients can now use carbomer-containing lubricating eye products, with the exception of the recalled products as above.

11.8.2 OCULAR DIAGNOSTIC AND PERI-OPERATIVE PREPARATIONS AND PHOTODYNAMIC TREATMENT

Specialist use only

11.9 CONTACT LENSES

See advice in BNF

Some drugs and preservatives in eye preparations can accumulate in hydrogel lenses and may induce toxic reactions. Therefore, unless medically indicated, the lenses should be removed before instillation of the eye preparation and not worn during the period of treatment. Alternatively, unpreserved drops can be used. Eye drops may, however, be instilled while patients are wearing rigid corneal contact lenses. Ointment preparations should never be used in conjunction with contact lens wear; oily eye drops should also be avoided.