

Glaucoma: using your eye drops and keeping up with reviews

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In short

Glaucoma damages the optic nerve, the nerve that carries what you see to your brain. Vision lost to glaucoma cannot be brought back, so treatment aims to protect the sight you have. For most people that means eye drops every day, even when your eyes feel fine, and every review visit kept.

What glaucoma is

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve. It is usually linked to raised pressure inside the eye, although some people have glaucoma with normal eye pressure.

The most common type, open-angle glaucoma, causes no symptoms early on. It slowly reduces your side vision, and many people do not notice a change until a lot of the nerve is damaged. You cannot check for it yourself. It is found at an eye examination.

Putting your drops in

Before you start, check the label and the expiry date, and make sure it is the right drop at the right time of day. If you wear contact lenses, take them out at least 15 minutes before your drops and wait 15 minutes before putting them back in.

1 Wash your hands.

Take the cap off and rest it on a clean tissue. Keep the tip of the bottle from touching anything, including your eye.

2 Tilt your head back.

Sitting or lying down is easier than standing.

3 Make a pocket.

Gently pull down your lower eyelid.

4 Squeeze in one drop.

Hold the bottle upside down above your eye and aim for the pocket. Resting your hand on your forehead keeps it steady.

5 Close your eye and press the inner corner.

Press gently with a fingertip for at least two minutes. This keeps more of the drop in your eye and less of it draining to your nose and throat.

6 Wipe away any extra

with a clean tissue, then repeat for the other eye if both eyes need drops.

If you use more than one kind of drop, leave at least 5 minutes between them.

Sticking to your drops

Glaucoma usually has no symptoms, so it is easy to forget a drop or to stop because your eyes feel normal. The drops only protect your eye while you keep using them.

- Use them at the same time each day. A phone or watch alarm helps.
- If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you remember. Do not add extra drops to make up for it.
- Get a new script before you run out. Your GP can also write one.
- Do not change how often you use your drops, or stop them, without talking to your optometrist or ophthalmologist first.
- If putting drops in is hard, ask someone to help you, or contact Glaucoma Australia about aids that make it easier.

- Store drops somewhere cool, away from heat, and never leave them in the car.
- Never share your drops or use anyone else's.

Side effects to tell us about

Some stinging, blurring or watering straight after a drop is normal. Tell us if it lasts longer than expected. Tell your optometrist, GP or ophthalmologist if you notice:

- Red, itchy, watery or swollen eyes
- Headaches or an ache above the brows
- Feeling tired, weak or dizzy, or a change in your mood
- A slower or faster heart rate, or trouble breathing
- A change in the colour of your eye

Your review visits

Glaucoma is lifelong, so it needs regular checks. At each review your eye pressure and optic nerve are checked, and your treatment may be adjusted. Your optometrist or ophthalmologist will tell you how often you need to come back. Keep every appointment, even when your eyes feel fine.

If eye drops are not enough, laser treatment or surgery may be options. An ophthalmologist discusses these with you.

Your family

Glaucoma runs in families. Let your parents, brothers, sisters and children know about your diagnosis. Glaucoma Australia recommends an eye examination every 2 years from age 40 for anyone with a family history of glaucoma, and from age 50 for everyone else. Eye tests at Lynbrook Optical are bulk billed for Medicare-eligible patients. See [eye tests](#).

When to call us on (03) 9702 9118

- You think you are having side effects from your drops
- You are finding it hard to use your drops every day
- You have run out of drops, or missed several days
- You notice any change in your vision

Call (03) 9702 9118

⚠ Go to the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital emergency department (32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, open 24 hours), or call 000, if you have

severe eye pain with nausea or vomiting, a headache, sudden blurred vision or haloes around lights. These can be signs of acute angle-closure glaucoma, which needs treatment straight away. Go also for any sudden loss of vision.

To book a review or an eye test, book online or call us on (03) 9702 9118.

FAQs

— Can I stop my glaucoma drops if my eyes feel fine?

No. Glaucoma usually has no symptoms, so feeling fine does not mean the drops are no longer needed. Talk to your optometrist or ophthalmologist before changing or stopping any drop.

— What should I do if I forget a dose?

Use it as soon as you remember. Do not put in extra drops to make up for the missed one.

— Can vision lost to glaucoma come back?

No. Treatment aims to protect the vision you still have, which is why daily drops and regular reviews matter.

— Should my family have their eyes checked?

Yes. Glaucoma runs in families. Glaucoma Australia recommends an eye examination every 2 years from age 40 if a close relative has glaucoma.
