

Information for patients and carers

Atropine treatment

Treatment of amblyopia 'lazy eye'

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

Why should I choose atropine?

Atropine may be an alternative option to patching treatment (please see the 'Amblyopia 'lazy eye'' leaflet for more information) or used when patching treatment is unsuccessful in improving the vision of the weaker eye. This may be because your child struggles to wear their patch. Depending on the level of vision of the weaker eye, the drops may be used alone or alongside a specific glasses prescription to enhance the effect of the drops.

IMPORTANT: This treatment will only be recommended if it is suitable for your child. If your child is seen by another healthcare professional, it is your responsibility to tell them that your child is using atropine drops.

What is atropine?

Atropine is a drug that can be used to treat amblyopia. The aim of using atropine eye drops is to encourage the weaker eye to work harder.

How does atropine work?

The effect of atropine is to dilate the pupil (widen the black part of the eye), by relaxing the ability of the eye to focus. This temporarily blurs the vision in this eye, particularly when looking at objects close to. The blurring effect of atropine can last for 7 days or more, and the pupil may remain dilated for up to 14 days after the last instillation.

What happens to my child's eyesight?

Atropine is placed in your child's good eye only. This means that the eyesight in their better eye will become blurred, forcing your child to use their weaker eye. However, this is a temporary effect and the vision in the good eye should return to its original level once the treatment has stopped.

My child wears glasses as well. Do they need to wear these at the same time?

Yes. It is important that your child wears their glasses, as the lazy eye will not improve if they do not. If a specific extra glasses prescription has been issued to use whilst your child is on the atropine drops, these glasses must be worn for a prescribed number of hours per day as advised by the orthoptist/ consultant ophthalmologist and the 'normal' glasses should be worn the rest of the time.

Will atropine improve my child's squint?

No. Atropine drops will only aim to improve the vision in the lazy eye. If your child has a squint, you may notice that sometimes the other eye starts to turn instead, particularly for close work. This is a good sign because it means that the weaker eye is being used.

What should I do with the atropine prescription?

The prescription for the atropine eye drops will be issued by the ophthalmologist. On collecting or receiving the prescription, please go to the hospital pharmacy to collect the atropine eye drops.

READ the patient information leaflet that comes with the eye drops.

DO NOT USE atropine past its expiry date.

DO NOT USE atropine after it has been open for 4 weeks.

STORE atropine in an upright position, situated in a cool dry place (25°C), away from direct sunlight and out of reach from children.

Atropine is poisonous if it is eaten. If you suspect this has happened, take your child immediately to the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department.

Please take unwanted or unused drops to a pharmacy or bring them back to the clinic for disposal. If you need a repeat prescription for the atropine eye drops, a letter should have been sent to your GP to continue supplying the atropine eye drops until advised otherwise.

If there are any problems with getting a repeat prescription for the atropine eye drops, please contact the Orthoptic Department on telephone number: **01772 522417**.

How do I use atropine?

1. Atropine eye drops are instilled into your child's good eye, only.
2. Wash your hands thoroughly.
3. Gently pull down the lower eyelid of the good eye with your finger.
4. Ask your child to look up, if possible.

Note: Atropine may be instilled whilst your child is awake or sleeping.

5. Instil one drop into the area between the eyeball and the lower eyelid.
6. Release the eyelid.
7. Ensure you wash your hands after instillation.

The atropine eye drops are instilled into your child's good eye, only. Theeye is your child's good eye. The drops should be instilled...../week.

Are there any side-effects of atropine?

Side effects are rare. If your child develops a red swollen eye, or shows unusual signs of irritability, headaches, rash or reddening of the skin,

fever, dry mouth, or sickness, stop the treatment and seek medical advice.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Instil the atropine drop as soon as you remember the missed dose. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue with the regular dosing schedule. Do not use a double dose to make up for a missed one!

How will using the drops affect my child?

If your child attends school or nursery, it is important that their teacher knows that they are using eye drops to treat their lazy eye. Your child may need to hold their books closer and may find it easier if sitting facing away from a bright window. As atropine makes the pupil much larger, it means that your child may be more sensitive to light. It would therefore be sensible for your child to wear a sun hat or sunglasses in bright weather.

If your child experiences any side effects, stop using the drops immediately, and seek medical advice by contacting the ophthalmology triage nurse on telephone number: 01257 245346 (Monday to Friday between 9am to 4.30pm). Should you require any medical assistance outside of these hours, please go to the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.

It is important that your child is closely monitored in the Orthoptic Department whilst on patching or atropine treatment. If you are unable to attend an appointment, please contact our appointments team on telephone number: 01772 524010.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the Orthoptic team on telephone number: **01772 522417** (Monday to Friday between 8.30am to 4.40pm). If the Orthoptists are not available when you call, there is a 24-hour answerphone where you may leave a message.

Orthoptic Department:
Broughton Suite (near the main entrance),
Royal Preston Hospital,
Sharoe Green Lane,
Preston.
PR2 9HT

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.accessable.co.uk
www.patient.co.uk
www.squintclinic.com
www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/

Follow us on social media @lancshospitals

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

Department: Orthoptic and Optometry
Division: Surgery
Production date: November 2023
Review date: November 2026
JR 1046 v1