



Glaucoma Medications

Glaucoma causes damage to the optic nerve, the wire bringing vision to and from the brain. This can cause loss of vision, and blindness if not taken care of.

Having high eye pressure can cause glaucoma. Lowering your eye pressure can lower your risk of losing vision. High eye pressure happens when the fluid in your eye does not drain well.

Your doctor can treat glaucoma with eye drops, pills, lasers, and/or surgeries. They all work to lower your risk of vision loss by lowering your eye pressure. There is no cure for glaucoma.

What are glaucoma medications?

The most common is eye drops.

- Eye drops lower your eye pressure by lowering the amount of fluid your eye makes or by helping the fluid to drain faster.
- They will not get back any damage that has already happened, but they can keep your glaucoma from getting worse.
- Glaucoma is life-long, so you may have to use eye drops for the rest of your life.

There are also pills for glaucoma, but because of their side effects, these pills are typically only used for a short-time, for instance to lower very high eye pressure before eye surgery.

How do I use glaucoma medications?

It is very important to use your eye drops as told by your doctor.

- Glaucoma eye drops need to be used every day.
- Some drops need to be used once a day, twice a day or three times a day.
- Your vision will not get better when you use your glaucoma medications.
- The goal of your medications is to prevent your glaucoma from getting worse.

What are the side effects from glaucoma medications?

Most people take their glaucoma eye drops without any serious side effects.

When a side effect does happen, most are for a short time, and get better with time:

- Stinging or burning
- Eye redness
- Blurry vision right after putting the drops in
- Dry mouth or metallic taste in the mouth
- Changes in your energy level

If your eye is very itchy and red, then it might be a sign of an allergy, and you should check with your doctor.

Some types of glaucoma medications might have specific side effects, but not everyone develops these side effects.

Prostaglandins (like latanoprost)

- Longer and darker eyelashes
- Darkening of the colored part of the eye (the iris) or the skin around the eye.

Beta blockers (like timolol)

- May slow the heartbeat or affect breathing (in patients who have asthma, COPD, or other breathing problems)
- If you have trouble breathing or chest pain, you should stop the eye drops and call your eye doctor.

Alpha-agonists (like brimonidine)

- May cause dry mouth, tiredness or drowsiness

If you develop side effects, please tell your eye doctor. Your doctor may send a different medication or dose of the eye drops.

Why do glaucoma drops have different colored bottle tops?

Glaucoma drops have long names that are hard to pronounce. Brand names are different from generic names too. Luckily, the drop bottles have different

colored tops. Knowing the cap color makes it easier for you to know your medication, and also easier for you to tell your eye doctor which eye drops you are using.

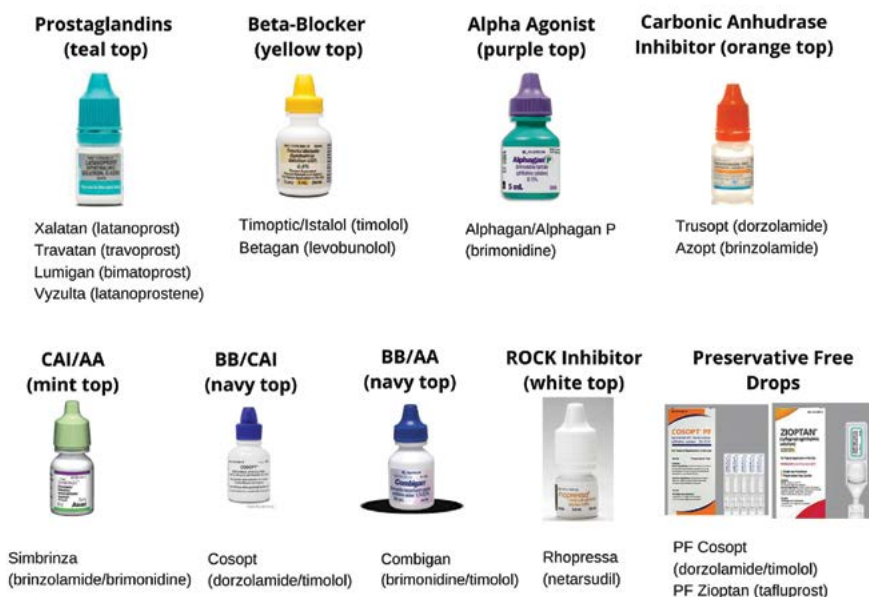


Image is courtesy of Duke Eye Center

Common bottle top colors

Green/Teal: Prostaglandins, like latanoprost eye drop

Yellow: Beta blockers, like timolol eye drop

Purple: Alpha agonists, like brimonidine eye drop

Orange: Carbonic anhydrase inhibitors, like dorzolamide eye drop

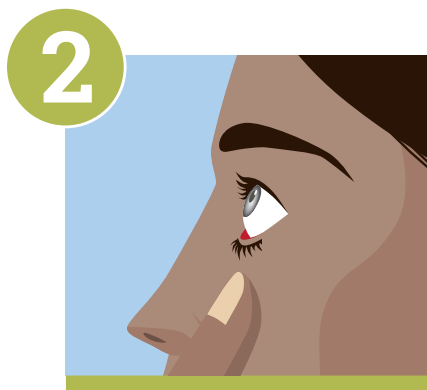
Dark Blue: Combination drops, like dorzolamide-timolol, brimonidine-timolol

White: Rho kinase inhibitor, like netarsudil eye drop

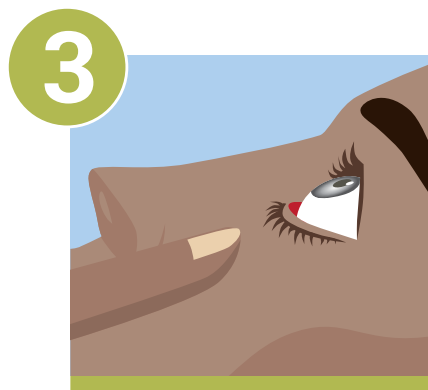
How to put in eye drops



Wash your hands



Put your head back or lie down.



Look up and pull your lower eyelid down.



Let the eye drop fall into the pocket that you made with your lower eyelid.

Do not touch your eye with the bottle tip.



Before opening your eyes, wipe away any extra fluid on your skin with a tissue.



Wait at least 5 minutes between drops (if you take more than one medication at a time).

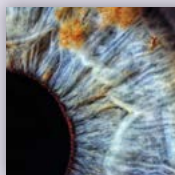
Put the cap back on the bottle and store it in a cool and safe place.

“Pro” tips

These tips lower the amount of the medication that enters your body through your tear ducts.

- **Eyelid closure**
Keep your eyes gently closed for about 1 minute after putting the eye drops in.
- **Punctal occlusion**
Press your pointer finger against the inner corner of your lower eyelid for 1-2 minutes after putting the drop in.
- If the package insert allows, keeping the eye drop in your fridge helps you know the drop has reached your eye as it will feel cold when it goes in.

Images courtesy of Duke Eye Center



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