

Dilating Eye Drops For Children

What are dilating eye drops?

Dilating eye drops are used to enlarge the pupil in the eye and relax the focusing power of the natural lens in the eye. Two drops are often used together, to help maximise dilation of the pupil and help with our examination.

Why are dilating drops necessary?

A large pupil allows for a better examination of the internal structures of the eye in order to diagnose and treat eye diseases. Also, by relaxing the natural lens of the eye, a more accurate measurement of refractive error and need for glasses can be made.

How are drops instilled?

Once the initial examination of vision has been completed, drops are usually administered into both eyes. Depending on eye colour one or two drops may be required.

How long do dilating drops last?

Dilating eye drops used during the examination can vary but usually last from 2 to 6 hours. Dilated pupils tend to persist longer in people with lighter coloured eyes, and occasionally a child's eyes may stay dilated for longer than 24 hours. A weaker formulation is used in babies under 12 months of age.

What are the effects of dilating drops?

Blurred vision, especially for near tasks is inevitable, as is some mild light sensitivity. Sun glasses or a hat may be helpful after a dilated eye exam. Children can return to school, but teachers should be aware of blurred vision while reading. Allergic reactions are extremely rare.

Do dilating eye drops sting?

Like most eye drops, there is some stinging immediately after instillation but this is only momentary.

*Parental support during drop instillation would be greatly appreciated.



Fig. 2 Pharmacologically dilated pupil.