Most people have had to administer eye drops to themselves. It’s a little more challenging when you do this for another person who may be uncertain about your skills or fearful of having something in their eye. This video in the Home Alone Alliance™ series will make it easier; it demonstrates two ways to administer eye drops, so it gives the person receiving the drops a choice of methods. In the video, Margaret just had cataract surgery and her grandson Tom will be helping her by administering the prescribed eye drops when she goes home today. Margaret is wearing an eye patch as recommended by her health care provider for the day of surgery, which is now performed mostly on an outpatient basis. Eye drops are prescribed for different reasons, including to prevent infection, reduce inflammation, and control eye pressure.

A nurse in the video demonstrates two methods to administer eye drops that can be used safely and accurately. It is important to follow the instructions carefully so that the prescribed dose gets into the eye and is not wasted, making the treatment ineffective. For cataract surgery it is particularly important to follow the prescribed dosages and timing correctly. A calendar, phone or computer reminder, or timer can help. Also check to see if the medication is supposed to be kept in the refrigerator. If so, you may need to warm it by rolling the bottle between your hands before administration.

The methods shown in the video are not limited to cataract surgery and can be used whenever eye drops are advised.

**Method One**
> Always wash and dry your hands before administering eye drops.
> Tilt the person's head back slightly.
> Pull the lower lid away from the eye by pulling downward with one finger to create a pocket.
> Let the medicine fall from the bottle's dropper into the pocket. Do not let the dropper touch the eye, eyelid, or anything else.
> If more than one drop or type of medication has been prescribed, wait five minutes before putting another drop in the same eye.
> Replace the bottle cap immediately so that nothing can contaminate the medication. Don't wipe or rinse the bottle cap.
> Wipe any excess liquid from the face with a tissue.
> Wash your hands thoroughly to remove any medication.

**Method Two**
> Always wash and dry your hands before administering eye drops.
> Tilt the person's head back slightly.
> Have the individual close his or her eye. Position the dropper near the corner of the eye and squeeze the drop into the corner.
> Try not to let the dropper touch the eye, eyelid, or anything else.
> When the person opens his or her eye, the drop will roll in. Have the person blink a few times.
> Replace the bottle cap immediately so that nothing can contaminate the medication. Don't wipe or rinse the bottle cap.
> Wipe any excess liquid from the face with a tissue.
> Wash your hands thoroughly to remove any medication.
Safety Reminders

> Don't put anything in the eye unless it's labeled for that use.
> Don't use medication that's changed color.
> Don't use medication that has expired (check the label for the expiration date).
> Don't touch the eyeball, eyelids, or eyelashes with your hand or the dropper.
> If the medication is supposed to be refrigerated, make sure you put it back after use.
> Store eye drops away from children and pets.

Additional Resources

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (ophthalmologists are physicians who specialize in eye care) has patient-oriented information on administering eye drops and tips on avoiding medication errors if more than one medication is prescribed. Go to www.aao.org/eye-health/treatments/how-to-put-in-eye-drops.


For more information on cataract surgery, go to the Mayo Clinic’s website at www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cataract-surgery/about/pac-20384765?p=1.

There are many other videos and resource guides in this series. Go to www.aarp.org/nolongeralone for a complete listing.

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