

Atropine eye drops for hypersalivation

(say: at-roe-peen)

What is atropine used for?

- Atropine eye drops are usually used to treat eye conditions but these can be also used orally under the tongue to help cut the amount of saliva you make.
- This is sometimes called sialorrhoea (say: sigh-alo-rear) or hypersalivation (say: high-per-sallyvay-shun) caused by certain medical conditions and medications.
- This is an unlicensed use of the medication. This means that the medication is being used in a way which is not covered by the UK license for the drug. This does not mean it is unsafe to use the medication in this way. There is some experience of using atropine eye drops for hypersalivation.

Are there any precautions with atropine?

Atropine is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your doctor will usually check that it is safe to give you atropine, but let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have glaucoma, urinary retention, gastrointestinal obstruction or suffer from heart, liver, kidney or prostate trouble.
- If you are taking any other medication for schizophrenia, dementia, depression or Parkinson's disease or a heart condition. Also, tell your doctor if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your doctor if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines.
- If you have limited dexterity or support to administer correct dosage, due to risk of overdose as bottle or unit dose minims difficult to manipulate.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What form does atropine come in?

Atropine is available as 1% eye drops. Prescribed as single use, preservative free minims.

What is the usual dose of atropine drops?

The dose is 1-2 drops under the tongue once daily; increase as advised by 1 drop every 2 days up to a **maximum of 2 drops four times daily**. **Do not use more than 2 drops at a time!**

NOTE: The minims can be kept for 24 hours once opened, so use one minim per day and then discard the container.

How should I use atropine drops?

- Apply the drops under your tongue.
- Be careful not to squeeze out too many drops – otherwise you might get side effects.
- Try using a mirror to check you're getting the right amount of drops.

- If this is too tricky, the other way is to put the drop or drops in a small amount of water and then swill it around your mouth, much like a mouthwash.

When should I use atropine drops?

- If you need to use it every day use it at regular intervals.
- A dose at bedtime will often help hypersalivation while you are asleep.
- It doesn't matter if you use atropine before or after food.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

- If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, unless it is within about 4 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this use the next dose as normal.
- Do not try to catch up by using two doses at once as you may get more side effects.
- If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the usual dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your doctor.

What will happen when atropine is first taken?

- Atropine begins to work in an hour or two.
- Full effect may not be seen for several days.
- Like all drugs atropine produces side effects. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. (See table below)
- Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.
- Report your side effects to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Is atropine addictive?

- Atropine is not addictive.

Can I drink alcohol while I am using atropine?

- If you drink alcohol while using atropine you may feel more sleepy.
- This is important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

Can I drive or cycle while I am using atropine?

- You may feel a bit sleepy at first when using it.
- You should be really careful as it may also slow down your reaction times.
- Until this wears off, or you know how atropine affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

Will atropine affect my other medication?

Atropine has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- If atropine is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. lorazepam, diazepam), or alcohol, it may cause more sleepiness.
- Do not use atropine with any cold or flu medicine that contains phenylephrine.
- The side effects of atropine can be increased by other medicines that have similar side effects (e.g. tricyclic antidepressants, some antihistamines, some antipsychotics).

Please see the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for the full possible list. Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

Is it OK to stop taking atropine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking atropine, your original symptoms may return. Most people need to remain on atropine for several months. You should always discuss with your doctor any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your medicines.

Are there any alternatives to atropine?

Yes, there are alternatives available so most people can find one which suits them.

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am using atropine eye drops in my mouth?

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (more than 1 in 100 people may get these)		
Constipation	When you cannot pass stools, or poo, regularly, or cannot completely empty your bowels.	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid, keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Numb tongue	You can get a slightly odd taste in the mouth. It can feel a little numb.	You can try using the atropine as a mouthwash.
VERY RARE but important (can be serious if not dealt with quickly)		
Urinary retention	Not passing much urine. Feeling you have a full bladder all the time.	See your doctor straight away, especially if this happens suddenly.
Glaucoma	Blurred vision, circles around bright lights, eye or head pain or sudden sight loss.	See optician in the next week, especially if you or a relative has had this before. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery until vision is clear.
Confusion, poor memory, dizziness	Your mind is all mixed up. Finding it hard to make decisions. Lightheadedness or feeling as if you are about to faint.	Your dose may be too high, contact your doctor.
Fast or irregular heart rate	Your heart beat feels faster than normal. The heart beat may not be regular.	Your dose may be too high, contact your doctor. Make sure you are not accidentally putting too many drops under the tongue. See a doctor straight away if the heart is beating very fast or the irregular beat does not go back to normal.
Skin flushing and increased body temperature	Feelings of warmth and rapid reddening of your skin	Your dose may be too high, contact your doctor.

The small print

This leaflet is to help you understand about atropine drops. This is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet. You must also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. If in doubt consult your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

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¹Adapted from: South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, 2015 and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust- Atropine for clozapine hypersalivation leaflet.

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