

## Dilating drops

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### **Purpose of risk management recommendations**

OMIC regularly analyzes its claims experience to determine loss prevention measures that our insured ophthalmologists can take to reduce the likelihood of professional liability lawsuits. OMIC policyholders are not required to implement risk management recommendations. Rather, physicians should use their professional judgment in determining the applicability of a given recommendation to their particular patients and practice situation. These loss prevention documents may refer to clinical care guidelines such as the American Academy of Ophthalmology's *Preferred Practice Patterns*, peer-reviewed articles, or to federal or state laws and regulations. However, our risk management recommendations do not constitute the standard of care nor do they provide legal advice. Consult an attorney if legal advice is desired or needed. Information contained here is not intended to be a modification of the terms and conditions of the OMIC professional and limited office premises liability insurance policy. Please refer to the OMIC policy for these terms and conditions.

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Dilating drops are used daily on countless patients during diagnostic examinations and surgical procedures. They are essential in order to obtain an adequate view of the retina and fundus. Indeed, failure to perform a thorough examination of the eye could lead to significant patient harm such as delay in diagnosis or failure to diagnose, as well as surgical complications due to poor visibility. This document will address the patient safety risks and provide risk management recommendations.

### **Patient safety risks**

- Allergic reaction: Reaction can range from inflammation to anaphylaxis
- Acute angle-closure glaucoma attack: Can cause rise in IOP, damage to optic nerve
- Systemic reactions
  - Increased blood pressure
  - Cardiac arrhythmias
  - Tachycardia
  - Dizziness
  - Increased sweating

## Visual side effects

- Photophobia
- Lack of accommodation
- Glare
- Blurred vision
- Decreased contrast threshold and high-contrast visual acuity

## Impact on activities of daily living

- Driving. Patient can be harmed or can cause harm to others
- Difficulty reading signs, judging distance, seeing traffic lights
- Operating machinery
- Reading and writing
- Ambulating

## Risk management recommendations

- Create patient safety
  - Make it hard for errors to occur: Identify patient safety risks and how to prevent them
  - Make it easy to recognize, respond to, and report errors that occur.
- Warn patients they will be dilated and have blurry vision
  - New patient letter
  - At time of appointment
  - Upon arrival by receptionist
  - During informed consent discussion
- Obtain informed consent first time eyes are dilated
  - Tell patient what you will be doing and why
  - Discuss risks, benefits, and alternatives
  - Should be obtained by the person administering the drops
  - Document that patient gave consent; can use signed consent form but not required
- Screen for allergies
  - Ask the patient
  - Use the patient's own words to describe
  - Check the medical record
  - Document in the medical record
  - Ask and update at each visit
- Screen for angle-closure glaucoma
  - Ask the patient.
  - Check the medical record for history of angle-closure glaucoma
  - Evaluate for shallow anterior chamber or narrow angle before administering.
  - Warn patient with known history not to get drops
  - If in doubt, consult with ophthalmologist before instilling drops.

- Prevent systemic side effects by preventing systemic absorption
  - Place your finger over the patient’s lacrimal sac and apply light pressure for one minute or more (or instruct patient to do this if able).
- Prevent falls
  - Assess for fall risk
  - Offer assistance, especially to elderly or visually-impaired patient, both inside and out to car
- Warn the patient of possible difficulty driving, operating machinery, ambulating.
- Offer sunglasses or remind to wear.
- Document warning, sunglasses reminder or offer, and offer of assistance walking.

### Chart stamp for easy documentation

- Patient screening
  - Had dilating drops before? Yes/No
  - Reaction? No. Yes: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Allergies? No. Yes: \_\_\_\_\_
  - On heart or blood pressure medications? No. Yes: \_\_\_\_\_
- Lacrimal duct blocked after administration
  - By staff \_\_\_\_\_ By patient \_\_\_\_\_.
- Angle-closure glaucoma screen
  - Patient told has narrow angle No/Yes
  - Medical record checked No/Yes
  - Penlight/slit-lamp exam No/Yes
  - Physician consulted? No/Yes
- Informed consent (staff initial)
  - Risks, benefits, alternatives discussed \_\_\_\_\_
- Drops given: \_\_\_\_\_
- Reaction: None/\_\_\_\_\_
- Sunglasses offered/recommended \_\_\_\_\_
- Warned not to drive \_\_\_\_\_
- Wants assistance to car No/Yes
- Assisted to car \_\_\_\_\_

#### Need confidential risk management assistance?

OMIC-insured ophthalmologists, optometrists, and practices are invited to contact OMIC’s Risk Management Department at (800) 562-6642, option 4, or at [riskmanagement@omic.com](mailto:riskmanagement@omic.com).