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From Drs. Fine, Hoffman, & Packer

GLAUCOMA MEDICATIONS

Glaucoma is a potentially blinding disease. Though it can be controlled by medication, it cannot be cured by it. If you have glaucoma, you must always be diligent in regularly using the medications that have been prescribed for you. If some condition prevents you from being able to put in your own eyedrops, make sure that someone else will do it for you.

Side effects are possible from any medication, so please let the doctor know if you are having any problems. A change can be made in the type or brand of the eyedrops you are using, or the strength of the eyedrops, or the time of day when you use them.

Until you have been told specifically by your doctor that you no longer need eyedrops or oral medication for your glaucoma, do not take it upon yourself to discontinue them.

Eyedrops

The different types of eyedrops used in treating glaucoma are all designed to lower the pressure within the eye, but they work in different ways. One type increases the size of the opening in the filters that let the fluid out of the eye. Another cuts down the amount of fluid that the eye secretes. A third type makes the pupil small and pulls the iris away from the area known as the angle so it can't block the drainage openings. The type prescribed for you is based on the type of glaucoma you have and your occupational and daily living needs.

Side Effects: Drops that shrink pupil size may cause dimness or blurring of vision or trouble seeing in the dark. Other possible side effects include irritation of eye membranes, or the development of allergies to the medicine or to one of the chemicals used to preserve it.

Very rarely, some individuals with heart or lung diseases (especially asthma) may have serious problems with the type of eyedrops known as "beta blockers." If you have been placed on this type of drop, tell your doctor of increased difficulty with any condition, so the type or brand of drop can be changed.

Storage: Some eyedrops require refrigeration if they are to be stored for a long time. If you buy large quantities of eyedrops for economy or other reasons, keep the unopened bottles refrigerated until you use them.

Oral Medication

There are oral glaucoma medications (called carbonic anhydrase inhibitors) that lower the pressure in your eyes. Sometimes they also increase the amount of fluid that passes out of your body, so you may notice that you need to urinate more frequently. These medications are prescribed either as capsules or as pills that are scored so they can be broken in half.

Side Effects: Oral medications sometimes produce unusual side effects that include numbness around the mouth, numbness or tingling (a feeling of "pins and needles") in the tips of fingers and toes, occasional loss of appetite, a metallic or "tinny" taste in the mouth. These peculiar symptoms often decrease as time goes on, but if they are especially bothersome, please discuss them with your doctor.

IF YOU BREAK OUT IN HIVES OR A RASH, IT COULD BE DUE TO THE MEDICATION, SO PLEASE LET THE DOCTOR KNOW RIGHT AWAY.