

Eye Drop Instillation by Qualified Technicians

Eye drop and ointment instillation is a task typically performed by ophthalmic medical personnel who are well-trained and/or certified. However, some states (such as New York), some hospitals, and the Joint Commission, which regulates accreditation of hospitals (not JCAHPO's Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology), are implementing regulations and policies where only licensed medical personnel are allowed to administer eye medications in all patient settings.

These regulations and policies severely limit the ability of the ophthalmologist to delegate this task. While intentions for patient safety are good, restricting the ability to delegate ophthalmic tasks to qualified ophthalmic personnel creates the potential of decreased quality and access of care for patients.

Ophthalmologists have a long, and successful history of more than 40 years in delegating the task of instilling eye drops to ophthalmic allied health personnel who are qualified, trained, and may be certified by the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO). In addition to certification, other models are successful in demonstrating that this task can be successfully delegated to trained and qualified ophthalmic medical personnel. More than five years ago, the Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians worked with their legislature to gain recognition of a Training Certificate on file for ophthalmic allied health personnel as a qualification to instill eye drops and ointments. JCAHPO has well-designed *Standards for Training on Instillation of Eye Drops and Ointment Medications* that can be used for training and testing the knowledge and skills required of the Eye Care Team.

JCAHPO's Board of Directors is working with the National Medical Association, Society of Military Ophthalmologists, and the Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians, in communicating to the State Ophthalmology Societies and the American Academy of Ophthalmology the need for them to advocate on behalf of our certificants and the ability of ophthalmologists to delegate this task which is essential to quality patient care. We are strongly encouraging these organizations to endorse JCAHPO's Standards and certification that ensures patient safety. ATPO's Board of Directors will review this issue at its April Board meeting.

Instillation of eye drops and ointments by untrained and non-certified personnel is not a future model that the ophthalmology medical profession should support. Standards and best practices for training and the qualifications of ancillary staff who can perform this task is vital in today's changing healthcare environment.

JCAHPO is committed to training ophthalmic medical personnel on the instillation of eye drops and ointments. Our Certification Committee also recently developed a *Standards Checklist* for both eye drop and ointment instillation which can be used for training and testing. William Ehlers, MD, recently conducted a webinar on this important topic and the recorded version will soon be available on www.actioned.org. Access the checklists here on the following pages.

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Best Practices*

Procedure for Instillation of Eye Drops

Purpose:

To administer medications according to written physician orders.

To maintain proper documentation of the administration of both prescription and non-prescription drugs.

To use the proper techniques when administering ophthalmic medications.

Step Complete	Step #	Step
	1	Verify the identity of the patient.
	2	Verify the medical directive (orders) for the instillation of eye drops.
	3	Check for history of any allergies.
	4	Ensure adequate room illumination.
	5	Wash hands. Put on gloves (optional).
	6	Check the medication label for correct application to eye(s). Check for expiration and verify which eye(s) is/are to be medicated.
	7	Explain the procedure to the patient including potential side effects. If instilling a dilating drop, check anterior chamber depth.
	8	Position patient in a sitting position with head tilted back.
	9	Remove cap; hold the dropper over the eye.
	10	Have the patient look up as the lower lid is gently pulled down; squeeze the dropper to release one drop into the inferior cul-de-sac. Do not allow the dropper to touch the conjunctiva, eyeball, eyelid or eyelashes. If contact is made, the bottle is considered contaminated and clinic policy should be followed with the contaminated bottle.
	11	Release the eyelid and tell patient to close the eye gently for 30 seconds to contain the drop, allowing even distribution of the eye drop, and preventing rapid clearance of medication caused by blinking.
	12	Replace the cap immediately after use.
	13	Blot excess medication from face with tissue and dispose of tissue in waste container.
	14	Repeat above steps for the second eye if indicated.
	15	Clean area; store medication according to instructions.
	16	Remove gloves (if used). Dispose of gloves according to clinic policy.
	17	Assist patient to comfortable position.
	18	Wash hands.
	19	Record administration and time of instillation in medical record as required.

***Note: We recommend reviewing the task with your ophthalmologist to follow any special or specific physician instructions or orders.**

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Best Practices*

Procedure for Instillation of Eye Ointment

Purpose:

To administer medications according to written physician orders.

To maintain proper documentation of the administration of both prescription and non-prescription drugs.

To use the proper techniques when administering ophthalmic medications.

Step Complete	Step #	Step
	1	Verify the identity of the patient.
	2	Verify the medical directive (orders) for the instillation of eye ointment.
	3	Check for history of any allergies.
	4	Ensure adequate room illumination.
	5	Wash hands. Put on gloves (optional).
	6	Check the medication label for correct application to eye(s). Check for expiration and verify which eye(s) is/are to be medicated.
	7	Explain the procedure to the patient including potential side effects.
	8	Position patient in a sitting position with head tilted back.
	9	Remove cap; hold the tip of the tube over the eye.
	10	Have the patient look up as the lower lid is gently pulled down; gently squeeze the tube to apply a one half inch (1 cm) ribbon of ointment into the inferior cul-de-sac. Do not allow the tip to touch the conjunctiva, eyeball, eyelid or eyelashes. If contact is made, the tube is considered contaminated and clinic policy should be followed with the contaminated tube.
	11	Release the eyelid and tell the patient to blink several times to allow even distribution of the ointment.
	12	Replace the cap immediately after use.
	13	Blot excess medication from face with tissue and dispose of tissue in waste container.
	14	Repeat above steps for the second eye if indicated.
	15	Clean area; store medication according to instructions.
	16	Remove gloves (if used). Dispose of gloves according to clinic policy.
	17	Assist patient to comfortable position.
	18	Wash hands.
	19	Record administration and time of instillation in medical record as required.

***Note: We recommend reviewing the task with your ophthalmologist to follow any special or specific physician instructions or orders.**