

GLAUCOMA MEDICINES ONLY WORK IF YOU TAKE THEM

If you have glaucoma, you are probably using eyedrop medications to lower your eye pressure. In glaucoma, high eye pressure damages the optic nerve, which connects your eye to your brain and tells your brain what you are looking at. Nerve damage from glaucoma is permanent. High eye pressure can cause glaucomatous vision loss. Treatment options are available.

There are many reasons that people don't take their medications as regularly as they should, and they don't always tell their doctor about these reasons. It is very important that you use your glaucoma medications as directed; if there is a reason why you can't use them regularly, you should share this with your doctor. Some of these problems and possible solutions include the following:

Forgetting to use them. If you frequently forget to use your eyedrops (more than once a week), try using routine daily activities as reminders. A morning drop can be remembered if you start putting it in whenever you brush your teeth in the morning. An evening drop can be remembered if you put it in right before you turn off the light before bed. Ask a family member to help you remember—they love you and want to help you.

Bothersome side effects. Some medications have side effects. If you frequently choose not to use your medication due to unwanted side effects, tell your doctor immediately. You can then work together to find a medication that is right for you.

Cost issues. Many medications are expensive, and glaucoma drugs are no exception. If you cannot afford your medication, many drug companies have special programs that will provide you with medications at reduced or little cost. If you are eligible, your doctor can help you enroll in these programs.

Difficulty getting the drops in. Holding the eyedrop bottle over your eye and squeezing a single drop into your eye can be challenging. To make matters worse, some bottles are made of hard plastic and are very hard to squeeze, especially if you have arthritis, weakness, or tremors. Dosing aids that help hold the bottle, aim the bottle, and squeeze the bottle are available for some medications, and your doctor can help you get these aids. In addition, asking a family member to help put your drops in can make dosing much easier.

The drops don't seem to help. Treating glaucoma is largely preventive. And since high eye pressure does not cause pain or blurred vision or other symptoms, using your drops regularly does not provide any detectable relief. It's natural to think that if they are not making you feel better—or see better—that they are not working and are not worth the hassle. Talk to your eye doctor about any concerns that you may have. But if your medication lowers your eye pressure, then it is working, and you should keep using it to keep your eye pressure low and help prevent further nerve damage.