Chloramphenicol for eye infections

Use chloramphenicol eye drops every 2-4 hours to begin with, and then reduce the frequency to four times a day as your symptoms improve.

Use chloramphenicol eye ointment 3-4 times daily. Alternatively, if you are using chloramphenicol eye drops during the day, use the ointment once at bedtime.

If your vision becomes blurred for a short while after using chloramphenicol, do not drive and do not use tools until you can see clearly again.

About chloramphenicol eye drops and ointment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>An antibacterial eye preparation</th>
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<td>Used for</td>
<td>Eye infections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Brochlor®; Chloromycetin®; Golden Eye Antibiotic®; Minims® Chloramphenicol; Optrex® Infected Eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Eye drops, single-use eye drops, eye ointment</td>
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Chloramphenicol eye drops and eye ointment are used to treat bacterial eye infections. Eye infections are a common cause of conjunctivitis. In conjunctivitis, your eye becomes inflamed, feels gritty, and may water more than usual. The white of your eye may look red, and your eyelids can become swollen and stuck together with a discharge when you wake up in the morning. Only one eye may be infected to begin with, but it often spreads to both eyes.

Most cases of infective conjunctivitis clear within a few days without treatment. For more severe infections, or for infections which do not clear on their own, an antibiotic eye drop or ointment such as chloramphenicol can be helpful.

Chloramphenicol works by helping to kill the bacteria which are causing the infection. It is available on prescription. You can also buy the drops and the ointment from a pharmacy, without a prescription, if it is for conjunctivitis in an adult or in a child over 2 years of age. Do not use chloramphenicol eye drops or ointment for a child under 2 years old, unless it has been prescribed by a doctor.

Before using chloramphenicol eye drops or eye ointment

To make sure this is the right treatment for you, before you start using chloramphenicol for an eye infection it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you wear soft contact lenses.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to chloramphenicol or to any other eye product.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

How to use chloramphenicol eye drops

1. Wash your hands before you use the drops.
2. Remove the cap from the bottle (or the tip of the unit if you are using a single-use unit).
3. Tilt your head back a little and pull the lower lid of your eye downwards to form a pocket.
4. Hold the bottle (or single-use unit) upside down near to your eye. Try not to touch your eye as you do this.
5. Apply enough pressure to release one drop into your eye. Only use a second drop if the first drop missed going into your eye.
6. Close your eye for a minute or two, and press gently on the side of your nose where the corner of your eye meets your nose. This helps to stop the drop from draining away and keeps it in your eye.
7. Repeat the process in your other eye if both eyes are affected.
8. Replace the cap (or if you are using a single-use unit, throw the used unit away).

How to use chloramphenicol eye ointment

1. Wash your hands before you use the ointment.
2. Remove the cap from the tube.
3. Tilt your head back a little and pull the lower lid of your eye downwards to form a pocket.
4. Hold the tube upside down near to your eye.
5. Apply enough pressure to the tube to release a thin line of ointment along the inside of the lower eyelid. Try not to touch your eye as you do this.
6. Close your eye for a moment or two, and then blink a few times to spread the ointment around the inside of your eye.
7. Repeat the process in your other eye if both eyes are affected.
8. When you have finished, remember to replace the cap on the tube to prevent the ointment from becoming contaminated.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Before you start treating your eyes, read the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet supplied with the product. It will give you more information about using chloramphenicol and will provide you with a full list of any side-effects which you may experience. If your eyes have an obvious discharge or ‘crust’, it can help if you bathe them with cool clean water before you use the chloramphenicol.
- At first, chloramphenicol drops should be used every two to four hours unless you have been told otherwise. (Just use the drops while you are awake - you do not need to wake yourself up during the night to put them in.) As the infection improves, you can reduce the frequency down to four times a day. If you have been given chloramphenicol eye ointment to use as well as the eye drops, apply the ointment at night only. If you have been given chloramphenicol eye ointment without any drops, use the ointment three or four times each day.
- Try not to miss any doses, but if you do forget, just use the drops/ointment as soon as you remember. Do not ‘double up’ the number of drops or the amount of ointment you use to make up for forgetting.
- When you first put the eye drops or eye ointment into your eye, they can cause blurred vision. This should quickly clear. Make sure you can see clearly before you drive or use machines or tools.
- Take care to avoid spreading the infection from one eye to the other, and to other members of your family. Washing your hands regularly (particularly after touching your eyes), and not sharing towels or pillows will help to prevent the infection from spreading.
- If the tip of the tube/bottle touches your eye(s) when putting the drops in, it is a good idea to squeeze out two or three drops straightaway on to some tissue and rinse the tip with salt water.
- Use chloramphenicol for a maximum of five days unless a doctor has told you otherwise. If your eyes are no better after two days of treatment, make an appointment to see your doctor for advice as soon as possible. You must also contact a doctor if your eyes become painful, if light hurts your eyes, or if your vision is impaired.
- If you normally wear contact lenses, you should wear glasses until your symptoms have completely gone. It is recommended that you wait for 24 hours after you last use chloramphenicol before you put your lenses in again.

Can chloramphenicol eye preparations cause problems?

Chloramphenicol drops and ointment can occasionally cause mild eye irritation or stinging, but these usually soon pass and not everyone will experience them. If the irritation continues, or if you experience any other eye problems, please speak with your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

How to store chloramphenicol eye preparations

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Chloramphenicol eye drops (including single-use units) must be kept in a fridge (2°C to 8°C).
- Chloramphenicol eye ointment should be stored in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.
- Throw away the bottle or tube of chloramphenicol after you have finished the five-day course of treatment, even if there is some left. Never keep opened bottles or tubes to use later.
- Single-use units should be used as soon as the unit is opened. Do not store or re-use opened units for subsequent doses. This is because the units do not contain any preservative.

Important information about all medicines

Make sure that the person supplying this medicine knows about any other medicines that you are taking or using. This includes any medicines you have bought, and herbal and homeopathic medicines.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are using.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you suspect that someone might have swallowed some of this medicine, contact your local accident and emergency department for advice.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.
Further reading & references

- Manufacturer’s PIL, Chloramphenicol 0.5% Eye Drops; FDC International Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated August 2016.

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