

Southtowns Eye Center

Eye Drop Medications for Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery can provide excellent vision by fixing the cataract, nearsightedness, farsightedness, and even astigmatism. Medications in the forms of eye drops are used before and after surgery to ensure good healing, to prevent infection and to limit scarring. These drops are mandatory and are important in achieving the best vision after surgery.

Cost of Medications

But medications are expensive, particularly brand name prescriptions. I won't be able to solve the health care mess but I can give my patients my input and a choice. You can have brand name medications or you can have the generics-it's your choice, but I want you to make an educated decision.

If your insurance company covers the medications, then your co-pay is typically similar with a brand-name drop and a generic drop. If you are paying completely out of pocket, ask prices first because some local pharmacies are charging expensive fees for generics. You may find the best generic prices at places like Walmart or Wegmans, but take the time to call around to check for prices. Typical co-pay amounts are \$25 to \$45 per medication. Sometimes we have samples of the medications in our office, but it can be hit or miss depending on when the local pharmaceutical agent visited us. In addition, since the sample bottles are smaller (0.5-1cc) than the prescription bottle (2.5-5 cc), they are insufficient for the entire course of therapy. Your insurance company may or may not cover the cost of your eye drops for cataract surgery. It's up to you and your pharmacy to determine this and sometimes make the phone calls to facilitate things. I want you to have the best surgery. Choose the medication regimen which suits your situation best. Feel free to call the office with any questions.

Antibiotic: I like to give each of my patients antibiotic eye drops before and after surgery. This is in an effort to prevent infection. Because of sterile techniques, cleanliness, and the antibiotics, the risk of a sight threatening infection (we call it "endophthalmitis") is less than 1 in 1000. The bacteria which cause infection after surgery typically come from the patient's own eyelids; this is why I start the drops before surgery.

Vigamox (brand name) is an antibiotic with great potency against a wide range of bacteria and it is convenient with three times a day dosing. It is my top choice for an antibiotic.

Dosing 3x/day for 3 days before surgery and 1 week after surgery.

Ofloxacin (generic) is an older antibiotic with less potency and a narrower range of effectiveness because many bacteria are already resistant to it. This may increase your risk of infection which could result in vision loss. Dosing 4x/day for 3 days before surgery and 1 week after surgery.

NSAID: This stands for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, which are used to prevent or treat inflammation or pain. At home, Motrin, Advil, and Aleve are all types of NSAIDs that can treat headaches or a painful knee. In the eye we use NSAID drops after cataract surgery to prevent swelling (edema), help healing, prevent scarring, and avoid pain (this is one reason why cataract surgery patients typically report zero pain). I consider the NSAID the most important medication to help with healing and ensure optimal vision after cataract surgery.

Prolensa (brand name) is the most potent ocular NSAID and it is convenient with just once a day dosing. It is my top choice for an NSAID. Dosing 1x/day for 3 days before surgery and 4 weeks after.

Ketorolac (generic) is a generic NSAID which has less potency and often burns on instillation. It requires 4 times a day to be effective. Dosing 4x/day for 3 days before surgery and 4 weeks after surgery.

Steroid: These are cortico-steroids (not bodybuilder steroids) which inhibit inflammation and they are used extensively in medicine, from inhaled steroids for asthma, to nasal steroids for allergies, to oral pills for auto-immune diseases. In ocular surgery steroids are used to reduce inflammation.

Durezol (brand name) is the most potent ocular steroid and it is also convenient with twice a day dosing. It is my top choice for a steroid. Dosing 2x/day for 3 days before surgery and 2 weeks after.

Prednisolone (generic) is a good choice for an ocular steroid, but because it is less potent, it requires 4 times a day dosing and there may be an increased risk of post-operative inflammation.

Dosing 4x/day for 3 days before surgery and 4 weeks after surgery.