

Eye medication and your pet

How to get the job done right!

Use this handout to learn more about proper administration of eye medication for a safe, stress-free experience.

Proper administration of eye medication is important to ensure your pet's eyes recover promptly from infection or injury, as well as to prevent injury to your pet's eyes while you apply the medication. These tips will make it easier on both you and your pet!

Here's how to do it:

1. Read the medicine label on your ointment or eye drops before you start so you know your veterinarian's dosing instructions.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Choose an area with good lighting so you can see what you're doing.
4. Take a deep breath and calm yourself. Pets can pick up on your anxiety, making them nervous and harder to work with. Talk softly to your pet throughout.
5. Tilt your pet's head up and steady it against your hand or lap.
6. Pull gently downward on the lower eyelid of the eye that needs medicine.
7. Steady the hand that is holding the medicine against your pet's head so wherever the pet's head moves, your hand goes also.
8. Squeeze out ointment or eye drops (amount will depend on what your veterinarian has written in the dosing instructions) into the space created by pulling down the eyelid. There's no need to put the medicine directly on the eyeball.
9. After you give the medicine and store it away out of your pet's reach, praise your pet and offer treats or play.
10. Wash your hands again. Good work! You did it!

What's going on in my pet's eyes?

There are many reasons why your pet may require eye medication. Common conditions include:

- **damage to the cornea** – this is the clear part at the front of the eye, and damage can result in the inner part of the eye prolapsing out through the cornea – not a good situation!
- **damage to another part** – while not as likely to result in an eye needing to be removed, damage to parts other than the cornea is painful to your pet and can result in infection if left untreated.
- **an infection** – this can be bacterial or viral .
- **dry eye** – some animals don't make enough tears and need medication to keep their eyes moist and healthy.
- **sterile inflammation** – this occurs when the immune system is damaging the eye tissue either due to allergies or an autoimmune disease.
- **increased eye pressure** – certain diseases cause the pressure inside the eye to increase, and medications can help keep the pressure normal so the eye isn't deformed and painful.
- **pigment changes** – the clear parts of the eye may become covered in dark pigment, resulting in vision loss.

General tips

- Don't point the tube directly at the eye, because if your pet moves suddenly, you could poke the eye. Your pet is also more likely to back away if a scary, pointy object is pointing toward the eyeball. Approach the eye from the side instead.
- If your pet is a dog, try putting some peanut butter or cheez whiz on a dog toy and placing the toy at the dog's eye level (on a chair, for example) so it's distracted by licking it off while you apply the medicine.

Tips for large dogs

You'll need a way to steady a dog of a bigger breed, because any dog naturally tries to back up if something's coming at the eye. Be sure to place your dog's hind end against something (a wall or your legs, for example) to avoid the backward scooting.

Tips for small dogs or cats

Place small pets at eye level (using your lap, a table or a chair). It might be helpful to wrap the pet snugly in a towel or blanket.

It is very important that you give the eye medication exactly as prescribed. Some conditions require very frequent treatment (up to every hour) to try and save the eye and prevent it from needing to be surgically removed. Antibiotic medications must be given at the time interval prescribed in order to treat the infection promptly the first time around. Failing to give an antibiotic as directed can actually make an infection harder to cure by creating an antibiotic-resistant population of bacteria in the eye(s).

If your pet has been prescribed more than one medication, you need to wait 5 minutes between medications to allow each one to be properly absorbed. If you have been given both liquid (in small bottles) and ointment (in tubes) medications, apply the liquid ones first and save the ointment for last, because ointments take longer than 5 minutes to be absorbed.



Still having trouble? Don't be embarrassed!

You can always call Cascade Vet Clinic at (250) 295-0312 for help or bring your pet into the clinic to have the medicine applied.

Your veterinary team is ready to help!