

### 'A word of Advice'

If your GP has prescribed antibiotics take them as directed and make sure to finish the course. Antibiotic resistance is much more likely to develop if antibiotics are not taken as directed.

We can reassure you that your GP will prescribe antibiotics when you need them.

By using antibiotics only when you need them they are much more likely to help you.

- Antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting infections.
- Many infections get better without antibiotics – eye infections are a good example of this. Antibiotics have little effect on eye discomfort.
- Simply cleaning your eye(s) by soaking and wiping the lids is usually sufficient.
- You can get helpful advice from your community pharmacist or optician.
- If you develop new or worsening symptoms contact your GP.

### When should I see my GP, Pharmacist or Optician?

You should seek advice if any of the following apply:

- Pain (mild discomfort is normal)
- Vision is affected and not cleared by blinking
- Severe redness of the white of the eye
- Recent eye injury or surgery
- Contact lens wearer
- Babies under 28 days
- Sensitive to light
- No improvement after 2 days
- Spots or blisters next to the eye
- There may be something in the eye
- The clear part in the centre of the eye looks cloudy
- Pregnant or breastfeeding

Remember your community pharmacist or optician may be able to give you helpful advice on symptoms.

#### Developed from initial work by East Lothian LHCC.

Designed by the Social Inclusion & Community Care Directorate of **Lothian NHS Board**.

Adapted by **NHS Borders** with Lothian Health Board's permission  
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**Eye Infection  
is an antibiotic  
really necessary?**

**Many infections get better just as quickly without antibiotics – eye infections are a good example of this.**

**We know that viruses cause about half of eye infections; in these situations antibiotics will not work and will not speed up recovery.**

### Background information

Antibiotics are very important medicines. Antibiotics help us fight infections caused by bacteria. They don't work at all in those infections caused by viruses.

We are finding that some bacteria can survive the effects of antibiotics – the bacteria become resistant, and antibiotics no longer work against them. The more we use antibiotics, the more likely it is that bacteria will develop resistance. This means that antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting infections. Antibiotics may also cause unpleasant side effects.

We can't stop resistance developing but we can do a lot to slow it down and stop it spreading simply by not using antibiotics when we don't need them.

### What Do We Know?

Studies have shown that most adults and children with eye infections will get better without an antibiotic in a few days. The studies also showed that adults and children were no more likely to develop further eye infections or develop eye problems.

Eye infections commonly occur when you have a cold; they sometimes occur alone.

Antibiotics have little effect on most eye infections, which will improve without treatment within a few days as the body's immune system usually fights off the infection.

If your infection persists and you or your child is unwell, then your GP may prescribe antibiotics.

In view of this and in conjunction with specialist opinion we will not give antibiotics routinely in the Borders for eye infections.

### Do I have an eye infection?

- One eye may be affected, but usually both. The white of the eye will look inflamed and red or pink.
- Eyes may feel gritty and water more than usual. Mild discomfort is normal.
- Eyelids may be swollen and stuck together with gluey discharge after a sleep.
- Vision is not affected. You may get some blurring due to the discharge, which clears on blinking.

### What can I do?

- Cleaning the eyelids with cotton wool soaked in freshly boiled and cooled water may be soothing.
- To help prevent passing the infection on: wash your hands regularly, particularly after touching your eyes. Do not share towels, pillows or utensils.
- If you are given eye drops or ointment do not wear contact lenses during the course and for 24 hours afterwards.