

Position Statement on the prescribing of Preservative Free Eye Drops – September 2016

The Ophthalmology working group under the remit of the DMAG (Dorset Medicines Advisory Group) have reviewed the increased use, prescribing of and clinical appropriateness of preservative free eye drops. As a result they have formulated this statement clarifying the scenarios and situations in which these preparations should be used.

The prescribing of preservative free eye drops should only be undertaken on the recommendation from secondary care or by a suitably qualified Health Care Professional (HCP) who has experience / training in the use of these drugs and has the ability to discuss or offer other treatment options to the patient. These suitably trained HCPs can be based either in primary or secondary care.

The recommendation to prescribe can be made following discussion at the patient's appointment or via advice and guidance (for example via telephone).

There have been scenarios where preservative free eye drops have been inappropriately initiated due to the patient stating that their non preservative drops sting .This is a normal reaction and should resolve within 5 minutes of instilling the drops. In some cases the introduction of an ocular lubricant may help.

There are a number of scenarios where preservative eye drops should be prescribed, these include:

- where there is documented evidence of an allergy to either a particular excipient or preservative
- if the patient has ocular surface disease
- if there is ocular surface inflammation
- if there is a requirement to administer eye drops more than 6 times a day
- if there is evidence of toxicity –demonstrated by persistent red eyes – there are some preservatives which act like a detergent and as a result makes the eyes go red
- if there has been prolonged use of eye drops in dry eye syndrome, as preservatives used in large quantities or over a prolonged period of time – months or years – may damage the delicate cells on the surface of the eye or cause inflammation.
- if the patient wears soft contact lenses, they may also need to use a preservative-free lubricant, as preservatives attach to the contact lens and damage the eye.

Written by: Caroline Simmonite on behalf of the Ophthalmology working Group September 2016
Approved by DMAG September 2016 - For review September 2018, unless new guidance dictates a review sooner

References: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dry-eye-syndrome/Pages/Treatment.aspx> Accessed 5/8/16

<http://cks.nice.org.uk/dry-eye-syndrome#!scenario> Accessed 5/8/16