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Eye Drop Mediations for Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery can provide excellent vision by fixing the cataract, nearsightedness, farsightedness, and even astigmatism. Medications in the form 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 financing political mess but I can give 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 excessive fees for generics. Some national brand pharmacies have different prices for each zip code and I've seen patients charged \$100 for a generic bottle that is less than half that price at a neighboring pharmacy. You may find the best generic prices at places like Costco and Wal-Mart, but take the time to call around to check prices yourself. Typical co-pay amounts are \$25 to \$35 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 – 1 cc) than the prescription bottles (2.5 – 5 cc), they are insufficient for the entire course of therapy.

My Golden Rule of Surgery

I perform each surgery the same way that I would if I was operating on my own family. I've done cataract surgery for both of my parents and I gave them what I considered the best medications. I paid for their medicines because they paid for my medical school education – a great deal for me! 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 to sometimes make the phone calls to facilitate things.

I want you to have the best surgery and I promise to deliver the same level of care as I did for my parents. Choose the medication regimen which suits your situation best. Feel free to call or email me with any questions or if you need help making this important decision.

Please Choose One:

- I would like the brand-name medications. I understand that my insurance plan may not fully cover the cost of these drops, but the additional potency and efficacy is worth it to me.

Brand Name

Sign here for Brand Name Rx: _____ date: _____

- I would like the generic medications. I understand that these medicines may have potential issues which put me at a higher risk for infection, inflammation, or pain after surgery, but the trade-off is worth it to me.

Generic

Sign here for the Generic Rx: _____ date: _____

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These are the medications that I prescribe for cataract surgery patients and the reasons:

- **NSAID:** This stands for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, which are used to prevent or treat inflammation and pain. At home, Motrin, Advil, and Alleve 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.



- **Ilevro** (brand name) is the most potent ocular NSAID and it is easy with just once a day dosing. I have used this medication with excellent results. It is my top choice for an NSAID.
 - dosing once/day for 3 days before surgery and 4 weeks after surgery
- **Ketorolac** (generic) is a generic NSAID which has less potency and often burns on instillation. It requires 4 times a day dosing to be effective.
 - dosing 4x/day for 3 days before surgery and 6 weeks after surgery

- **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, my obsession with 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

- **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 steroid sprays for allergies, to oral pills for auto-immune diseases. In ocular surgery steroids are used to quell inflammation and help the eye accept the new man-made lens implant as its own.



- **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 surgery
- **Prednisolone** (generic) is a good choice for an ocular steroid, but because it is less potent, it requires 4 times a day dosing. There may be an increased risk of post-operative inflammation.
 - dosing 4x/day for 3 days before surgery and 4 weeks after surgery (yes, 4 weeks)