

How to Administer Eye Medications

Every animal tolerates eye medications differently. Some pets are great at sitting still while others need some extra care if they are fearful or wiggly. The best way to approach needing to give any medications to an animal is to try to make it a quick and positive experience. Encouraging reinforcement is always helpful, such as giving them treats and continuous praise during the whole process. The goal is to not draw it out too long to where your animal can start to get anxious, knowing that “something is about to happen”.



Positioning for success:

Administering eye medications can be much easier if you have another person with you to help hold your pet while you apply the drops or ointment. The person holding the animal will need to make sure they cannot back up out of their hold, while also holding their head still, ensuring that the applicator does not touch the surface of the cornea. The latter is important, as touching the applicator to the eye can spread infection or cause injuries. This approach also allows for the animal to not see the medication coming at their face, which can cause anxiety or fear.

If you are alone, try sitting on the floor with your pet in your lap (**Figure 1**) or standing up with your pet on a table or counter at waist height. For smaller dogs, you can also have the handler hold the dog on a table sideways close to their chest with one arm under their lower abdomen and the other hand resting in front of their chest (**Figure 2**).



Figure 1



Figure 2

Position your pet so that their back is towards you. If you have a larger dog have them sit with their back to a corner while you stand behind them so that they cannot back up or run forward (**Figure 3**). More resistant large dogs may require you to crouch down to wrap your body around them for a firmer grip (**Figure 4**).

Some pets can be the opposite where too much restraint can cause them to become fearful and resist your hold. Another approach is to offer treats such as peanut butter that takes them a moment to ingest so that they are distracted and become more relaxed.

It is important to read the body language of your animal. Some animals are more resistant to drops vs ointment as well. While some medications cannot be replaced with an ointment or drop version, you can always ask your veterinarian if you do know your pet tolerates one over the other.

If you are right-handed, place your left hand below your pets' jaw to stabilize their head (**Figure 5**). Then bring your right hand forward to place on their forehead, just above the brow bone for stabilization and hold the bottle at least 1 inch above the eye in case the pet does try to move its head. From here you can quickly administer the drops into the affected eye (**Figure 6**).



Figure 3



Figure 4

Placing ointment is similar in application but can also be easier to apply head on rather than having them face away from you. For this approach still use your left hand to stabilize the animals' head. With your right hand place the outside of the palm of your hand to rest against the pets' cheek or above the brow bone to help prevent accidentally touching the eye, as stated above. Typically, you will use a 1/4-inch strip of ointment. Gently pull the lower lid down, exposing the conjunctiva, or fleshy tissue below the cornea and deposit there. You can also place the medication on the inside corner of their eye closest to their nose, or if they will allow it, you can simply apply it from above (**Figure 7**). After administering, your pet will often blink a few times which will then cause the ointment to spread across the eye to the appropriate areas.

You can also warm the ointment tube prior to application in your palm so that it runs smoother with less resistance to applying. With all medications have the cap off in preparation to avoid struggling.

For some animals a light sedative, muzzle, or wrapping them in a towel or blanket may be required if they are particularly wiggly. Please ask your veterinarian if you think adding a sedative or anti-anxiety medication would help.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Have more questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact the Animal Vision Center at (425) 307-6020 to let us know if you have any further questions or concerns about medications or your pet's eyes.

