

Medicating Your Dog's Eyes

courtesy of Animal Info Publications

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Why do you need to do it?

Although some dogs may never have the need for eye medications, most will probably end up with a minor problem at some stage that requires treatment. This may be from a physical trauma to the eye, such as a scratch from a stick or a foreign body like a grass-seed. They may also suffer from conjunctivitis (inflammation of the inner lining of the eye-lids) due to an allergic reaction, bacterial or viral infection, some sort of irritation or even a condition that prevents the normal production of tears. Dogs with long hair may also get eye irritations if hair isn't clipped back and out of their eyes. There are also some hereditary conditions that may require frequent eye treatments, but these are less common.



If your dog is blinking a lot, squinting or scratching at its eyes, then take a closer look. If the eyes appear different than normal in any way, or are red, swollen, cloudy, dry, watering or discharging a lot, then you should seek veterinary advice. Apart from causing your dog discomfort, if symptoms are left too long for some disorders, vision loss could be a real possibility. There are many different kinds of drug available in eye medications, and they are not always interchangeable between disorders. No medications should be administered without veterinary advice.

How do you do it?

Your dog will need to remain quite still while you administer the medication, but only for a few seconds. Hopefully you will have conditioned it to be used to being touched around the eyes and head, and that it will also be comfortable with sitting or lying down for you. Try to use as little physical restraint as possible, so your dog doesn't feel threatened. If you use an encouraging and confident tone of voice, followed up by a small food reward or a big pat, the whole process should be quick and easy.

For a medium or large sized dog, I find it easiest to have the dog sit on the floor. I put one foot behind it to stop it from scooting backwards, and then lean its head onto my leg while applying the medication to the eye on the far side. You could also ask it to lie down if it is too fidgety sitting. With its head on the ground, it is also a good angle for the drops to fall straight in with gravity.

For a smaller dog, it may be easier to administer the medication with the dog either sitting, standing or lying down on a bench or on your lap, so you can hug it firmly towards your body if necessary with your arm, while medicating the eye on the far side.

Medications will either be in the form of drops, or a thicker ointment. Ointment can be applied by pulling the lower eyelid down, and squeezing a ribbon of the medication into the pocket that forms between the eyeball and the eyelid. You will then need to allow the upper and lower eyelids to close together and gently massage to spread the ointment. Drops can be applied in the same manner, but won't need massaging to spread - a couple of blinks by your dog should distribute it well enough. Make sure you don't allow the tip of the bottle or tube to come into contact with your dog's eye. If your dog is

a bit fidgety, or you are nervous with applying the treatments, you could simply wash your hands well, and apply the ointment via your finger tip.

How often is this necessary?

Most eye treatments will generally be short courses typically lasting from a few days to a couple of weeks, although sometimes for chronic conditions, longer treatments and repeat treatments may be necessary. It is usual for there to be multiple treatments in a day, although ointments generally last longer, so may not have to be given as often.