

1 August 2016

Safety Alert – Atropine 0.01% eye drops

It is important for pharmacists to note that the 0.01% strength of atropine eye drops is being prescribed in New Zealand as therapy for myopia (short sightedness) control in children. This condition may emerge at around 8-12 years of age, and may continue slowly until 26 years of age.

It essentially results from the eye growing “too long”. Childhood myopia can progress very quickly in some children and may be associated with an increased risk of developing sight threatening conditions such as myopic macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and retinal problems.

Research has demonstrated that the use of atropine eye drops at the lower concentration of 0.01% (instead of the proprietary strength of 1%) is effective at reducing the rate of myopia progression, is well tolerated by patients and associated with fewer side effects.

The 0.01% atropine preparation is not currently commercially available in New Zealand and therefore must be sourced from a compounding pharmacy, in Auckland or Christchurch.

Action recommended – whenever paediatric prescriptions for atropine 1% eye drops are presented, please confirm the strength of the preparation required with the prescriber, as the 0.01% strength cannot be found in GP patient management systems and there is potential for the 1% strength to inadvertently be selected from the list of commercially available formulations.

If you have any questions regarding this alert, please contact me at the Pharmacy Council.

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