OSCE checklist for eye drops administration

An OSCE checklist for eye drops administration covers checking the prescription and which eye, washing hands, tilting the head back, pulling down the lower lid, instilling the drop without touching the eye, gentle pressure on the inner corner and recording.

OSCE checklist for eye drops administration: steps to practise

1. Check the prescription for the right patient, medicine, which eye, dose, time and expiry, and check the allergy status. Make sure the eye is written in full, not as an abbreviation.
2. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity (name, date of birth and wristband), explain and gain consent.
3. Check the bottle is for this patient, the label and expiry date, the date it was opened and that the nozzle is clean.
4. Ask the patient to remove contact lenses unless the prescription says otherwise.
5. Wash your hands and put on gloves if your policy says. Clean away any discharge with a fresh swab for each wipe and each eye, wiping from the inner to the outer corner.
6. Sit or lie the patient with the head tilted back and ask them to look up.
7. Gently pull down the lower eyelid to form a pocket.
8. Hold the dropper above the pocket without touching the eye, the lid or the lashes, and instil the prescribed number of drops into the pocket, not onto the cornea.
9. Ask the patient to close the eye gently, not squeeze it, and press lightly on the inner corner of the eye if your policy teaches it.
10. Wipe away any extra fluid with a clean tissue. If more than one type of drop is prescribed, leave the gap the leaflet or policy says.
11. Remove gloves, wash your hands, sign the chart and record any reaction. Report sudden pain, a change in vision or a marked reaction to the nurse in charge or prescriber.

What candidates commonly forget

- Touching the eye with the bottle tip
- Instilling directly on the cornea
- Using the same swab for both eyes
- Not checking which eye
- Not asking about contact lenses
- Not waiting between different drops

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy.

Practise the hands-on steps with a classmate or in a skills lab, because an AI patient cannot watch your technique. You can practise the talking part with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. Next, try A medicine round in rehabilitation. Back to the medical surgical nursing OSCE page: medical surgical nursing OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for eye drops?

Check the prescription and which eye, wash hands, confirm identity and consent, clean discharge, tilt the head, pull down the lower lid, give the drop without touching, close the eye gently, press the inner corner, sign and record.

Why press the inner corner?

It can reduce drainage of the drop into the nose and throat and may reduce side effects.

What if the patient blinks and I miss?

Wipe away the drop and try again once. Check how many drops are prescribed and do not give extra beyond that.

Sources

- NICE NG5: medicines optimisation
- NICE CG139: infection prevention and control

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.