



## Lasting coverage

# All eye drops are not created equal

ECPs recommend “super” drops to promote healing, deliver relief

**By Carol Patton**

Reviewed by Kevin Johnson, OD,  
John Lahr, OD, FAAO, and  
Mihir Parikh, MD

It's no secret that after LASIK or cataract surgery, patients must keep their eyes moist. That's not always an easy task, however, considering how many different brands of eye drops sit on store shelves that claim to offer relief but don't always deliver.

One drop, however, delivers on its promise, according to three eye-care professionals who spoke with *Optometry Times*. Many eye-care professionals are recommending novel lubricant eye drops (Oasis Tears, Oasis Medical) because the drops don't contain any preservatives and have provided long-lasting relief for mild to severe symptoms of dry eye, they said.

Unlike other drops, these contain glycerin, a natural compound designed to moisturize and protect the ocular surface of the eye; the drops also are free of toxic polymers. What really distinguishes them from others, however, is the higher molecular weight of the hyaluronic acid, said John Lahr, OD, FAAO, divisional vice president of provider relations and medical director at EyeMed Vision Care, a national vision plan based in Mason, OH.

The molecular structure of the hyaluronic acid is a long chain, said Dr. Lahr, explaining that because it has very elastic

properties, it binds together for long-lasting coverage.

“It basically spreads itself out on the surface of the eye,” said Dr. Lahr, also an optometrist who was in private practice for 28 years. “As tears are moved across the surface of the cornea during the blink of the eyelid, it compresses the molecule. Then, when the eyelid opens, the pressure releases and the drop comes back to form a very thin, front surface coating. Most eye drops used for lubrication basically don't have any of this long-lasting, elastic property.”

Some drops also diminish a patient's vision. In an effort to be long-lasting, the drops are thick, which frequently causes blurry vision. Many also contain preservatives to prohibit microorganisms from growing and multiplying in the eye drop liquid. But there's a downside. When patients apply these drops more than four times per day, he said, they can develop an allergic reaction or sensitivity to the preservative.

“The first treatment for most eye irritation and dry eye is really to start with an ocular lubricant,” Dr. Lahr said. “Everybody I recommended these eye drops to says they're more comfortable and longer-lasting than anything they've tried before. Even surgeons I worked with in the past have said these are the best pre- and post-LASIK drops that they've encountered.”

**Take-Home Message**

A novel lubricant eye drop (Oasis Tears, Oasis Medical) contains glycerin—a natural and comforting compound—and is free of toxic polymers. In addition, the molecular structure of its hyaluronic acid spreads itself over the surface of the eye, providing a long-lasting, elastic quality to the drop.

**Not all the same**

Dr. Parikh

Mihir Parikh, MD, refers to the eye drops as “super drops” because they don't cause secondary reactions. As an ophthalmologist practicing at the Advanced Ophthalmology Institute in La Jolla, CA, he said only a handful of eye drops on the market today fall into this category.

“It's important to understand that all drops are not the same,” said Dr. Parikh. “A lot of patients use whatever was on sale that week at the drugstore. So when they complain about dry, red, or irritated eyes, the first question I ask is precisely what drops are they using. If they don't use (the drops) or any of the other super drops, I say ‘You need to convert.’”

Then there's the issue of compliance. Especially after LASIK or cataract surgery, patients routinely must use eye drops to heal optimally. But if the



drops are not effective, are expensive, or are inconvenient to use, he said, patients typically are not adherent. Because the drops are long-lasting, he said, they're more convenient to use and are competitively priced because patients don't have to apply them as frequently as they do other brands.

"We know that if patients' eyes are dry before or after surgery, it can cause visual blur or a slower recovery," said Dr. Parikh. "By putting these drops in, their eyes heal faster, and they quickly get more stable, crisper vision. That results in happy patients, which directly enhances our practice."

And happy patients make happy doctors. That's why Kevin Johnson, OD, an optometrist at the Shofner LASIK Center in Nashville, TN, said he prescribes the drops to his LASIK patients.

"We're up to our eyeballs with folks suffering from dry eye," Dr. Johnson said. "We'll prescribe artificial tears perhaps every hour after surgery because that's the

biggest battle we fight – dry eyes in the weeks following LASIK surgery. [The lubricant eye drop] is a longer-lasting drop. Our re-sealable vial used every 3 or 4 hours can get patients through the whole day."

What makes these drops special, he said, is their tear break-up time, which is how quickly the tear film evaporates from the eye. The drops extend this time to well over 10 seconds, allowing patients to feel better and see better more quickly, he said.



Novel lubricant eye drops (Oasis Tears, Oasis Medical) are designed to provide long-lasting relief for the symptoms of mild to severe dry eye. (Photo courtesy of OASIS, Medical, Inc.)

Still Dr. Johnson said he lets his patients decide which drops to use by administering an eye test. He places the patients' brand or a popular brand of eye drops in one eye and the lubricant drops in the other. He says that patients end up choosing the lubricant drops almost every time.

"There's a very noticeable difference," said Dr. Johnson. "This is a game-changer sort of eye drop. With this drop, we're able to get patients more quickly to the goal line, seeing well and feeling more comfortable. It offers a quicker recovery." **OP**



Dr. Johnson

## FYI

### Kevin Johnson, OD

Phone: 615/497-5512

E-Mail: kjgolfclub@yahoo.com

Dr. Johnson did not indicate any financial interests related to the subject matter.

### John Lahr, OD, FAAO

Phone: 513/300-1683

E-mail: jwlahr@earthlink.net

Dr. Lahr did not indicate any financial interests related to the subject matter.

### Mihir Parikh, MD

Phone: 858/450-4213

E-mail: drparikh@neweyes.com

Dr. Parikh did not indicate any financial interests related to the subject matter.