

### EYEDROPS EASE PRESSURE

## New Glaucoma Drugs

**T**wo new prescription-only eyedrops could help people who can't tolerate or aren't sufficiently helped by current treatments for glaucoma. Recently approved by the FDA, both bimatoprost ophthalmic solution (Lumigan) and travoprost ophthalmic solution (Travatan) help reduce fluid pressure inside the eye. High pressure can damage the optic nerve.

Healthy eye pressure, as measured by an eye doctor, is 11–21 mm/Hg. In studies of 1,161 people with glaucoma, 55% of

those who used Travatan reduced eye pressure below 18 mm/Hg, compared with 33% of those who used another glaucoma drug, timolol (Timoptic). In an Australian study of 724 people with glaucoma, 64% of those who used Lumigan reduced eye pressure to 17 mm/Hg or less, compared with 37% of those using timolol. Side effects of Lumigan and Travatan may include gradual darkening of eye color and eyelid skin and increased thickness, number, and darkness of eyelashes.

### ADDED RISK FOR IRRITATION, DAMAGE

## HRT Linked to Dry Eyes

**A** study of more than 25,000 postmenopausal women found that those who use estrogen-only hormone replacement therapy (HRT) were 70% more likely to develop dry eye syndrome, a condition in which tears fail to lubricate the eyes, causing pain and irritation, blurred vision, and possible damage to the cornea (*JAMA*, Nov 7, 2001).

By comparison, women who used estrogen with either progesterone or progestin had just a 30% higher risk for the condition than women who never used HRT. Estrogen may inhibit or alter the meibomian gland, which produces the oily substance in tears that prevents them from evaporating too quickly. If you experience any dry eye symptoms, discuss them with your doctor. The syndrome can be treated with lubricating eyedrops and sometimes with minor surgery. —JSR

### ON THE HORIZON

## BETTER EYE TEST

Vision testing for children could be quicker and easier with a handheld device called the SureSight Vision Screener, developed by Welch Allyn, Inc., of Skaneateles Falls, NY.

In less than a minute, the device measures light bouncing off the retina through the lens of the eye. This assesses refractive error—when light rays don't focus properly on the retina in less than a minute. On children too young to read eye charts, it could detect nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism, as well as vision problems that can cause lazy eye (amblyopia) and partial or full vision loss in one eye.

The screener is available to doctors and other health professionals. —JSR

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