

Magnitude and Determinants of Self-Medication as Part of Self-Care Among Adult Population of Western Saudi Arabia – A Survey

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ABSTRACT

To present the prevalence, determinants, and components of self-medication of eye medications among the Western Saudi adult population. In 2024, a sectional survey was conducted among adult Saudi persons using eye medication. A closed-ended questionnaire noted the demographic ocular profile, use of self-eye medication, presenting symptoms, and complications. The prevalence and factors associated with self-medication of eye medications were estimated. We surveyed 728 participants. The main symptoms were burning in the eyes, red eyes, dryness of the eyes, and itching. Artificial tears and antibiotic eye medications were the leading self-medicated eye preparations. Nearly half of the participants read instructions for eye medication usage and side effects. One in six uses the recommended dose and medication for a longer duration. Half do not dispose of eye drop bottles, and 25% use medicines prescribed for others. The prevalence of self-medication was 18.4% (95% CI, 15.6–21.2). If persons are considered using old prescriptions for current ailments, it could be as high as 33.8% (95% CI 30.4–37.2). Believing that symptoms are trivial, the condition does not require ophthalmic professionals' guidance, and advice from family members and friends was the main enabler for self-medication. Age group <30 years ($P = 0.01$) and use of contact lenses ($P = 0.01$) were predictors of self-eye medications. The rate of self-eye-medication is low. To promote self-care, patient education, strict monitoring of laws regarding over-the-counter eye medicine, and redefining the role of optometrists in this regard are recommended.

Keywords: Self-care: self-medication, eye medication, health behavior, visual disabilities, abuse of eye medications

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