

Everett C. Madson, MD, MSc
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Diseases of the Retina*

Peter J. Whitted, MD, JD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Corneal, Cataract, Glaucoma
and Refractive Surgery*

Michael A. Halsted, MD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Corneal and Cataract Surgery*

David A. Hanks, DO
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology
and Cataract Surgery*

Jeffery J. Hottman, MD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Corneal, Cataract and
Refractive Surgery*

Kathryn E. Hodges, MD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Pediatric and Eyelid Surgery*

Mark D. Emig, MD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Diseases and Surgery of the Retina*

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*Comprehensive Optometry,
Adults and Children*

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*Comprehensive Optometry,
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*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
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Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma and
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*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
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*Comprehensive Ophthalmology
and Cataract Surgery*

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*Comprehensive Optometry,
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*Comprehensive Optometry,
Adults and Children*

Michael R. Feilmeier, MD
*Comprehensive Ophthalmology,
Corneal, Cataract and
Refractive Surgery*

Krystal A. Wells, OD
*Comprehensive Optometry,
Adults and Children*

Matthew L. Willis, OD
*Comprehensive Optometry,
Adults and Children*

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Omaha, NE 68154

715 Harmony Street, Suite 300
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

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Midwest Eye Care, P.C.

4353 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68131
402-552-2020
Facsimile 402-552-2367
www.midwesteyecare.com

Dear Patient,

The United States healthcare industry has experienced significant changes in the past few years, but not all are in the best interests of patients. In particular, the cost of some types of eye medications has increased significantly, including the eye drops we need you to use after cataract surgery.

As part of your after-surgery care, your doctor will issue prescriptions to you for (a) a steroid eye drop to reduce post-operative inflammation and (b) an antibiotic eye drop to reduce the risk of infection. Both medications play a key role in your post-operative care, but they are also quite expensive.

As recently as two years ago, generic equivalent prices were 80-90% less than the prices for name-brand drugs. Unfortunately, as health-care reform squeezed the revenues of large name-brand drug manufacturers, the name-brand manufacturers responded by purchasing generic drug manufacturers. As a result, some generic medications are just 10-20% less than their name-brand equivalents. In the past two years, the cash price of several generic eye drops has increased from as little as \$10 to more than \$100.

The steroid medication we prescribe is prednisolone acetate, a generic form of the medicine Pred Forte. The cost per bottle is approximately \$40-\$90 for a 5ml bottle if paid by cash. If you have prescription coverage, prednisolone acetate is usually included on an insurance company's formulary and will be available for less than the cash price. If you are having cataract surgery on both eyes, you will need to purchase one 5 ml bottle of prednisolone acetate for each surgery.

The antibiotic medication we prescribe is Vigamox, which in May 2014 had a cash price of \$130-\$145 per bottle. Vigamox is on most insurance company formularies and may cost less if you have drug coverage. The generic antibiotic drop we recommend is gatafloxacin, which in May 2014 had a cash price of \$110-\$125. Gatafloxacin is relatively new and was not included on most formularies in May 2014. You will need to purchase one bottle of antibiotic drops for each surgery. If you cannot afford the recommended antibiotic, an alternative can be prescribed, but is not felt to provide the same level of protection against the low risk of infection post operatively.

Our surgeons are paid 50% less for cataract surgery than they were 20 years ago, and other providers and hospitals have seen similar cuts. Consequently, it seems unusual that in an era of cutting costs, pharmaceutical companies have free rein to purchase generic manufacturers and raise prices indiscriminately. Patients – particularly those without drug coverage – bear the largest burden of these price increases. If you would like to see changes in this area, please contact your Congressmen.

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