Information for Patients

Laser Retinopexy

Why has this treatment been recommended for me?

This treatment is needed when you develop a retinal tear. The retina is the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye. The vitreous is a jelly like substance found inside the eye. As we grow older, the vitreous can shrink and pull on the retina, causing a tear, and sometimes a small bleed. This can also happen following trauma and in short-sighted people whose retina can have weak areas.

How does it work?

The laser creates small burns around the tear. This causes scarring which acts like a barrier and prevents the retina from detaching.

What happens on the day of treatment?

Please allow up to two hours for the appointment.

On arrival, the nurse will test your vision and put dilating drops in your eye. When you are ready, the doctor will take you to the laser room and put in anaesthetic drops to numb the surface of your eye.

Laser can be done in two ways:

Direct: In this method, you will be asked to sit at the laser machine, and the doctor will put a contact lens on your eye. This helps to keep your eye open and also helps the doctor to see the retina.

Indirect: Here, you will be lying on a reclining chair/bed during the procedure. The doctor will wear a special device around their head. This enables them to focus the laser onto the retina. They may use a special device to press on your eye in order to see the tear better.

You will see several bright flashes of light during the treatment. You need to remain fairly still during the procedure. The procedure can take 10-15 minutes.

Does it hurt?

The laser is quite intense and can cause sharp or stabbing pains. Some people just feel a dull ache/discomfort. You need not be anxious about this; it just means the laser is working. If you want the doctor to stop at any time please tap the table. It may be helpful if you take some pain relief medication such as paracetamol before the procedure.

What happens afterward?

Your vision may be dazzled and blurred for some time after the laser. It may be helpful to wear dark glasses following the laser. You should not drive or operate machinery on the day of treatment. No special precautions need to be taken.

You will be reviewed in the outpatient department in about two weeks, in order to check if the laser has worked.

What are the side effects?

- Spots in the vision.
- Pain/discomfort.
- Redness of eye – usually settles down in a few days.
- Bleeding is rare and transient if it occurs.
- Accidental laser to the centre of the eye.
- A membrane may develop in the centre of the eye – this is not very common, and usually occurs a long time after treatment.
- Progression – occasionally, the laser will not be enough to prevent a retinal detachment. In this case, you will need surgery.

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What happens if I don't have the treatment?

Fluid from the eye can enter through the tear and pass underneath the retina, causing the retina to detach. If this happens, your vision will drop, and you will need urgent surgery to re-attach the retina.

What should I look out for?

Please contact the eye hospital immediately on the telephone numbers below if you notice any of the following:

- Shadow in front of the eye.
- Lots of flashing lights.
- New floaters.

Where can I find more information?

• British and Eire Association of Vitreoretinal Surgeons www.beavrs.org

• Royal College of Ophthalmologists www.rcophth.ac.uk

• Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) health/eye-conditionswww.rnib.org.uk/eyehealth/lookingafteryoureyes

• NHS Choices www.nhs.uk/conditions

What should I do if I experience any problems?

If you have any problems following the laser treatment or any questions on anything contained in this information leaflet, please contact a member of staff in Clinic Eye D on (0161) 276 5543 Monday – Friday 8.00 am – 5.00 pm.

If your problem is urgent and the department above is closed or you are unable to get an answer, please ring Ward 55 on (0161) 276 5512 available 24 hours every day.