

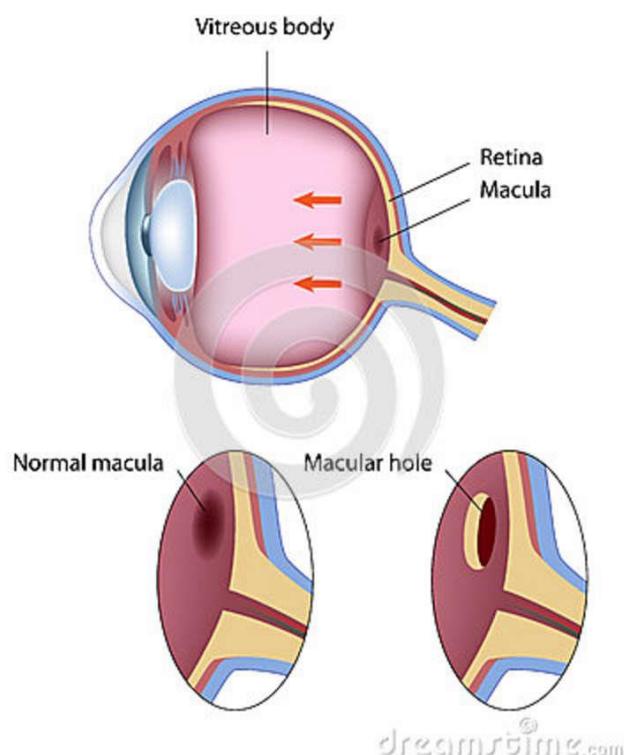
Patient Information Factsheet for Macular Hole

Department of Ophthalmology

What is a macular hole?

A macular hole is a small hole in the macula, which is in the centre of the retina. The macula is the part of the retina which is responsible for our sharp, detailed, central vision.

Macular holes usually only affect one eye, although there is a small chance that the other eye will be affected.



How will this affect my eye?

As we get older the vitreous, the jelly that takes up the space in our eyeball, can change. It becomes less firm and can move away from the back of the eye towards the centre, if this does happen then the space that is left behind fills with aqueous fluid, a water-like substance which is produced by the eye.

Usually the vitreous jelly changing causes no problems to vision at all but it may cause an increase in floaters or flashing lights.

In some people the vitreous jelly is firmly attached to the retina over the macular area. As the vitreous jelly shrinks it can pull the macula away from the back of the eye. This can cause a small tear to develop in the macula. This is the start of a macular hole. If the aqueous fluid then seeps into the hole, it can cause the sight to become blurred and distorted.

There are a number of different stages to a macular hole. These stages are usually classed by the size of the hole and the layers of the eye which are affected. This is important to know because in the early stages it is possible for macular holes to heal themselves. This means that sometimes an ophthalmologist (eye specialist) will want to monitor the progression of a macular hole before recommending any treatment.

However, in most cases a macular hole will develop and distort vision. In the final stages of a macular hole most central vision will be lost.

Treatment

An operation can be performed to help limit sight problems that a macular hole causes. The surgery is an attempt to help the macula lie flat on the back of the eye. If this is successful then often sight problems can be helped. There are two main stages to the treatment.

Surgery is done to remove the vitreous jelly and insert gas into the eye. The gas is inserted to help the macular hole heal in the correct place. This gas is lighter than air, so it can float upwards. The gas acts like a bandage pressing the macula hole flat onto the back of the eye, repairing the hole and making sure that there is no risk of further damage or retinal detachment.

The operation can be performed under general or, more commonly, local anesthetic.

Following the operation and during the recovery period, which the ophthalmologist (eye specialist) would confirm the time frame to you, the gas smoothes the retina back flat onto the eye. During this time the gas bubble is slowly getting smaller so that eventually it is no longer in the eye. As this happens the space that was taken up by the gas is filled with aqueous fluid - the natural fluid made by the eye.

While the gas is in place there may still be some distortion to sight, but when this gas has been absorbed and the aqueous fluid has taken its place, sight should be improved.

In many people there is some improvement in vision following the surgery and recovery time. However, the operation's main effect is to stop the sight becoming any worse.

Aftercare – How posturing works

- This process usually lasts for 7 to 10 days but can be less on advice from your ophthalmologist.
- Usually 50 minutes out of every hour need to be spent face down.
- Time off from posturing is usually allowed for things such as eating and using the bathroom.
- Nurses usually discuss how much time needs to be spent posturing before the operation.
- It is important to remember that some of your time off from posturing may also be taken up putting in any eye drops you need following the surgery.
- It is not necessary to lie face down completely flat and many people posture whilst sitting in a chair. This means sitting in a chair and leaning forward onto some sort of support such as a stool or another chair. Obviously using pillows can make this posture much more comfortable.

If you experience any problems please call 01438 288122. Please use the Menu Option 3 or 4.

Urgent Eye Clinic – Opening times:

- Monday - Friday: 9am to 7pm.
- Saturday: 9am to 12:30pm.
- Closed from Saturday after 12:30pm until Monday at 9am.
- Closed Bank Holidays - please attend your local A&E department.

Contact details:

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