

Patient Information Factsheet

Argon Laser Treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy

Department of Ophthalmology

People with diabetes can have problems with their eyesight. This is why it is essential you attend your regular eye screening appointments.

How does the laser work?

The laser will seal off blood vessels at the back of your eye to reduce further sight loss. Laser treatment is very effective but in some cases eyesight can decrease despite timely use of laser treatment.

There are two types of laser treatment: Focal and Pan-Retinal Photocoagulation (PRP). Focal is used for swelling of the macula and Pan-Retinal Photocoagulation (PRP) is used for more advanced treatment.

What happens at the appointment?

At your outpatient consultation it will be decided if laser treatment is required. If it is required, laser treatment will be completed in a special room within the outpatient clinic by an ophthalmologist (eye surgeon). Where possible this will be completed at this appointment. There may be more treatment required as each case is different.

After your vision has been tested by a member of the nursing staff, drops will be put into your eye to enlarge the pupil and prevent a rise in eye pressure. You will be asked to wait approximately 30 minutes for these drops to take effect.

You will be seated in front of the laser and have local anaesthetic drops put in your eye to avoid any discomfort. The eye surgeon will place a contact lens on the front of your eye to ensure the focus of the laser beam. The treatment can take up to an hour depending on the type and amount of laser you need.

During the treatment you need to sit still and follow the instructions from the eye surgeon as to where you look to avoid damage to other parts of the eye. It may be necessary to have a nurse to assist by holding your head in the correct position.

After the appointment

You will be asked to make an appointment for a follow up visit to the eye clinic in a specified period to check whether more laser treatment is required.

You must not drive yourself home after this procedure as your vision will be reduced due to the dilating drops and this can take four to six hours to return back to 'normal'.

A pair of sunglasses will help reduce the glare when you leave and until your eyes return to normal (which can take four to six hours due to the eye drops).

Problems you may encounter with macular laser treatment

- Small 'blind spots' near the centre of vision.
- A reduction in colour vision.
- Rarely, some permanent loss of central vision.

Problems you may encounter with PRP laser treatment

- A reduction in night vision and colour vision.
- A reduction in peripheral vision. In some cases, severe enough to prevent you holding a driving licence. However, 80% of patients retain driving vision.
- In very rare cases, a permanent loss of central vision due to laser burn hitting the centre of the retina.

General advice for 'Focal' and 'PRP' laser treatments

- If you experience pain following laser treatment you are advised to take pain relief tablets, for example, paracetamol.

General advice for your eyesight and diabetes care

- Attend your regular eye clinic or retinal screening appointment.
- Maintain good blood sugar control, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Have these checked with your GP surgery regularly.
- Avoid smoking.

If you have any concerns or require any further information please contact the Urgent Eye Clinic.

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:

The Lister Treatment Centre
Lister Hospital
Coreys Mill Lane
Stevenage
Hertfordshire SG1 4AB

Telephone 01438 288122 - Select Menu Option 3 or 4

Date of publication: August 2014
Author: Treatment Centre
Reference Number: v3 (October 2017)
Review Date: October 2020
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