Patient information factsheet

Laser retinopexy

What is the retina?

The retina is the light sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. It is made up of several layers. For the retina to work properly, these layers need to stay in contact with each other and with the underlying tissues. You have a weak spot or hole in one of the layers of your retina. If left untreated, fluid can enter the hole/weak spot and push the retina away from the underlying tissues leading to a retinal detachment and loss of vision.

What is laser retinopexy?

Laser retinopexy uses a powerful light beam around the hole to seal or “spot weld” the retina to the underlying tissues, stopping the retina from detaching.

What happens during the laser treatment?

- You will be given drops to enlarge your pupil
- After the doctor has explained the procedure to you an anaesthetic drop will be put in your eye.
- The doctor will then place a contact lens on the surface of your eye. This will focus the laser.
- The doctor surrounds the hole/weak spot with laser. You will see a series of bright flashes and sometimes feel mild discomfort.
- The laser may be delivered through a special device worn on the doctor’s head.

What happens after the treatment?

Immediately after the laser you will be dazzled. Your vision will be misty for a few hours and should return to normal by the next day. You should not drive on the day of your laser.
Can the retina detach after laser retinopexy?

Laser retinopexy considerably reduces the risk of retinal detachment but it can still occur despite laser retinopexy. You should seek help immediately if you notice:

- New floaters (Any floaters in the vision that were present before the laser will still be there afterwards but with time will become less noticeable)
- Flashing lights in the eye
- A change in vision like a curtain coming across

If you experience these symptoms please ring:

Eye Casualty 023 8079 6592 (Anytime - 24 hour service)

Are there any risks to laser retinopexy?

Laser retinopexy is a widely used, safe treatment.

- There is a small risk that it will fail to prevent a retinal detachment in the future.
- There is a very small risk that the retina may bleed or develop scar tissue that distorts the vision after laser. Both of these effects could affect vision and require surgery.

Will I need further follow up?

The laser reaction takes about six weeks to fully develop. At this stage your eye will be re-examined to check that the laser has sealed the hole/weak spots.

An important reminder

Please do not drive yourself to the hospital. You will need to travel by public transport or arrange for someone else to take you home after your appointment. You should not drive or operate machinery for the rest of the day.

For a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688.