

YAG laser capsulotomy following cataract surgery (page 1 of 2)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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During your cataract operation, the natural lens inside your eye was removed. A new plastic lens was put inside the lens membrane (or capsule). In a small number of patients, the capsule thickens after surgery and becomes cloudy resulting in blurred vision.

This can happen months or even years after the operation. Apart from affecting your vision, the thickening does not damage the eye in any way. YAG laser capsulotomy is the only way to treat this. This is a simple, commonly performed procedure.

Are there any alternatives?

The alternative to a laser capsulotomy is to do nothing. The capsule may or may not continue to thicken. If it does, you can consider laser capsulotomy at a later date.

Are there any risks?

Complications after this treatment are very uncommon. Occasionally the opening made by the laser beam is incomplete or not big enough and the treatment needs repeating at a later date. Immediately following the laser some new floaters are often noticed.

Extremely rarely, some patients can get a build-up of fluid in the macula, the part of the eye responsible for detailed central vision. This build-up of fluid is called macular oedema (swelling), which causes blurring or distortion of vision.

Another extremely rare complication is retinal detachment, when the fine light sensitive membrane at the back of the eye can come away from the wall of the eye.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, telephone the Eye Clinic for advice **immediately**, or visit your nearest accident and emergency department:

- Excessive pain
- Sudden onset of floaters not present immediately after the laser.
- A new defect in the field of vision in the lasered eye(s).
- Loss of vision
- Flashing lights
- Increasing redness of the eye.

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What do I need to do to prepare?

Since this is an outpatient treatment, you can eat and drink as normal. You must continue to take any eye drops and other medication as normal on the day of the treatment (unless instructed otherwise). Please note that you will not be able to drive yourself home after the procedure so please think about how you might get home.

What happens during the Laser Treatment?

You will need to visit the outpatient department for a few hours. We will carry out the treatment in one of our laser treatment rooms. Your eye will first be reassessed and dilating drops applied. You will be asked to sign a consent form to signify that you have understood what is involved and agree to have the procedure.

You will have some drops put into your eye including an anaesthetic to numb the eye. You will then sit at a machine similar to the machine used to examine your eyes at the eye clinic, with a special laser attached. The doctor will put a special contact lens on your eye before applying the laser beam.

The treatment is painless; but you might get a slight discomfort when the laser is being applied. This takes between 10 and 15 minutes per eye. You may need to have both eyes treated.

After the procedure, you will return to the waiting area. You may be discharged or your clinician may check the eye as necessary.

What happens after the procedure?

After the treatment, most patients find that their vision is blurry for a few hours. The eyes can be sensitive to bright lights. Because of this, it can be helpful to have someone to go home with you, but this is not essential.

You should not drive; ride a motorbike or bicycle for the rest of the day. You may be discharged or asked to come to the outpatient department a few weeks after the laser treatment to make sure your eye has settled down properly. This appointment will be given to you before you leave the hospital. Your clinician will tell you if and when you need to be seen again.

What do I need to do after I go home?

Following the procedure, no special treatment is required, and you can go back to your normal daily activities straight away.

If you have discomfort once you have returned home, we suggest that you take your usual painkiller; following the instructions on the pack. It is normal to have itchy, gritty eyes and mild discomfort for the remainder of the day after the treatment. In some cases you may be prescribed a short course of Anti-inflammatory drops. These help to minimise inflammation (not infection) within the eye. You carry on with other treatments as normal.

You can do all of your daily activities as you would normally without any problems including returning to work the next day. Please continue to take any prior medication unless specifically advised not to do so.