

# Information for Patients Undergoing YAG Laser Capsulotomy

Medical Retina Unit  
01253 956739



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# Why do you need YAG laser capsulotomy treatment?

The natural lens of the eye is surrounded by, and contained within a transparent capsular bag. When performing cataract surgery, the Surgeon carefully opens the front portion of the capsule in order to remove the lens. After completely removing the natural lens, a new artificial intraocular lens is positioned inside the capsular bag. This clear capsule supports the intraocular lens implant.

Following cataract surgery, the capsule may become thickened and can cause blurred, hazy vision.

## **Benefits of YAG capsulotomy**

Improves clarity of vision provided the rest of the eye is healthy.

## **What is YAG laser capsulotomy treatment?**

The YAG laser machine is used to make an opening in this thickened capsule and thus enabling light into the eye, improving the clarity of the vision, provided the rest of the eye is healthy.

## **Where is YAG capsulotomy performed?**

In the Outpatients Department.

## **Is YAG laser capsulotomy treatment painful?**

No. Laser treatment in the majority of patients is usually completely painless, but sometimes may be a little uncomfortable. Should this be the case please inform the Doctor or Nurse.

## **How long does a YAG laser capsulotomy treatment take?**

YAG capsulotomy is an outpatient procedure and can take just minutes to perform, but you should allow up to 2 hours for your appointment.

## **Can I drive following this treatment?**

No. This is because dilating eye drops may be used to open up the pupil(s). Even if dilating eyedrops are not used, your vision will be a little blurred for minutes or hours after the treatment.

It is therefore advisable not to drive and to make alternative arrangements.

### **Do I need to be accompanied for my treatment?**

Not necessarily. However, if dilating drops are used, they can have a blurring effect on your vision, which can, in some cases, last up to 8 hours.

### **What will happen during treatment?**

Present your appointment letter at the Clinic Reception desk where you will be booked into the Clinic. The Nurse will check your distance and near vision so please bring your glasses with you. You may have dilating drops put into your eye(s) (if requested by the Doctor performing the treatment) to open up the pupil(s), the black part of the eye, which can take around 20 minutes to dilate the pupil fully.

Either experienced Eye Doctor or a supervised doctor in training will carry out the YAG capsulotomy procedure.

You may have anaesthetic eye drops instilled to allow the comfortable fitting of special contact

lens onto the front surface of the eye(s). This is to help to focus the laser beam onto the area to be treated. It also helps to keep the eyelid(s) open. This contact lens is removed at the end of the procedure. Once the lens is in place, you will see a bright light. This allows the Doctor to see the internal structure of the eye.

To carry out the YAG capsulotomy, you will be asked to place your chin on the frame of the laser machine, which has a chin rest and handles for you to hold on to. There will be a bright light shining into your eye(s) and you will hear a clicking noise, which is the noise of the laser machine being fired.

## **YOU WILL NOT FEEL ANY PAIN.**

The laser makes small holes in the capsule. These holes join up and this makes an opening in the capsule.

It is important that you keep your head and eyes still during the laser treatment, unless instructed otherwise by the Doctor. **Should you need to move your head, for whatever reason, please inform the Doctor before doing so.**

## **After the treatment**

After the laser treatment, the eye will be temporarily 'blind' or 'dazzled' caused by the bright light emitted from the laser machine. Your vision will gradually begin to return, usually in a series of colours, over a period of 5-10 minutes but will remain blurred for 4-6 hours until the dilating drops wear off, if they were used.

## **Follow-up appointment**

You may be given a date and time to be followed-up (before you leave) if requested by the Doctor performing your treatment.

## **Post YAG capsulotomy care/restrictions**

There are no physical restrictions following treatment.

You may need anti-inflammatory eyedrops in your eye following treatment, if requested by the Doctor.

You may be given a single dose, in the form of a tablet after treatment to offset any rise in your intraocular pressure(s) if requested by the Doctor. This will be fully explained to you by the Doctor if the need should arise.

If you wish to see your Optician for an up-to-date refraction (eye test) after having YAG capsulotomy laser treatment, you should wait for 2 weeks before doing so. This will give your eye time to settle fully before seeing the Optician.

You may be given a prescription to take to your local Chemist to obtain anti-inflammatory eye drops, to be used for 1-2 weeks, if the Doctor feels they are necessary.

### **Benefits of YAG capsulotomy**

This procedure improves clarity of vision provided the rest of eye is healthy.

### **Possible risks of YAG capsulotomy laser**

Please read the following risks carefully. Should any of these occur, we would recommend that you contact your Optician/GP or present yourself to A&E. There your eye will be reviewed and you will be referred back to the Ophthalmology Department if necessary.

### **Inflammation**

Any procedure carried out on the eye can cause

inflammation. This inflammation is usually quite mild but you may be given a prescription for anti-inflammatory eye drops if requested by the Doctor performing your laser treatment.

### **Elevated intraocular pressure**

If a lot of laser power is required to perform the procedure, this can cause a transient (temporary) rise in intraocular pressure(s). The Doctor performing the procedure will decide, after completion of treatment, if it is necessary for you to be given eye drops or tablets to offset this risk.

### **Lens pitting**

This happens if the laser beam causes scratches on the artificial lens implant whilst being focused on the thickened capsule. This is only a problem should the lens pitting occur directly on the visual axis (in the line of your vision).

### **Floaters**

For a few days or even weeks after the completion of the YAG capsulotomy laser treatment, you may be aware of black cobwebs or spider-like floaters in the eye. They will, over time, become less noticeable usually within a few days or weeks after the treatment. These floaters are caused by



the bits of debris formed from the opening made in the capsule.

### **Cystoid Macular Oedema (CMO)**

This is a relatively rare complication. CMO is the accumulation of fluid at the back of the eye (the retina) in the central area (the macula) due to leakage from capillaries. This in turn may cause a drop in central reading vision but can usually be treated should it occur.

### **Retinal detachment**

This is a rare complication and more a risk in the myopic (shortsighted) eye. The symptoms of retinal detachment are:-

- Flashing lights
- Sudden increase in the amount of floaters that persists over time
- 'Curtain' coming down over the eye
- Blank patch in the field of vision.







## Useful contact details

**Medical Retina Unit**  
**01253 956739**

Hospital Switchboard: **01253 300000**

## Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives. You can contact them via:

Tel: **01253 955589**

email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:

**Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Victoria Hospital,  
Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR**

Further information is available on our website: **www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

## References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

**Procedural Document and Leaflet Coordinator 01253 953397**

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