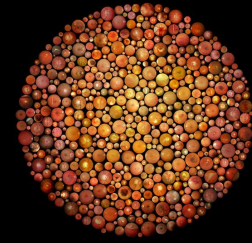


YAG Laser Capsulotomy

Patient Information Leaflet

CATARACT



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KEY POINTS

- Posterior capsule opacification (PCO) is a common occurrence after cataract surgery, affecting around 10-20% of patients at some point.
- Symptoms are similar to having a cataract again: blurring, glare, and dimming of colours.
- YAG laser capsulotomy is a quick, painless outpatient procedure that takes only a few minutes.
- The procedure is carried out at the laser machine, which looks similar to the examination microscope you are already familiar with from clinic.
- Most patients notice a clear improvement in vision within a day or two.
- Serious complications are rare; the most important is retinal detachment, which is uncommon and treatable.
- For the vast majority of patients, a single treatment is all that is needed - PCO does not recur.

What Is Posterior Capsule Opacification?

During cataract surgery the cloudy natural lens is removed and an artificial lens is placed inside a thin, clear membrane called the lens capsule - the same capsule that originally held your natural lens. Over the months or years after surgery, a small number of lens cells left behind can multiply across the back (posterior) surface of this capsule, causing it to become thickened and hazy. This is posterior capsule opacification, or PCO.

PCO affects roughly 10-20% of patients and can appear within months of cataract surgery or not for many years afterwards. It is not a sign that anything has gone wrong with the original operation.

Symptoms

Because PCO reduces the amount of light reaching the retina, the symptoms are very similar to those of a cataract:

- Blurred or cloudy central vision
- Glare and haloes around bright lights or sunshine
- Colours appearing dimmer or washed out
- Difficulty reading, driving, or recognising faces

Symptoms develop gradually and are often first noticed when the vision is no longer as sharp as it was immediately after cataract surgery.

What Is YAG Laser Capsulotomy?

Without treatment, PCO tends to progress gradually, and the symptoms slowly worsen over time. YAG laser capsulotomy is the standard treatment. A precise laser beam is used to create a small, clear opening in the cloudy posterior capsule, directly behind the artificial lens, allowing light to pass through to the retina unobstructed and restoring vision.

The procedure is painless, takes only a few minutes, and requires no cuts, stitches, or injections. For the vast majority of patients a single treatment is all that is needed - once the opening has been made it is permanent, and PCO does not recur.

Before the Procedure

Your vision and eye pressure will be checked. Dilating drops are then placed in the eye; these take up to 30 minutes to work and blur the vision temporarily. While the pupils are dilating I will examine the retina to make sure there are no other issues that need attention first.

Once everything is ready, I will go through the procedure and its risks with you in detail and ask you to sign a consent form.

The Procedure

You will sit at the laser machine, which looks similar to the examination microscope you are already familiar with from clinic. Anaesthetic drops are used to numb the eye, and a small contact lens may be placed on the front of the eye to steady it and focus the laser beam.

The laser light itself is invisible, although a bright aiming light is used so that I can see the capsule clearly. Each laser pulse lasts a tiny fraction of a second, and you will hear a quick clicking sound as each pulse is delivered. The procedure usually takes just a few minutes.

After the Procedure

Your vision may be blurry for the rest of the day because of the dilating drops and some floating debris released into the eye by the laser - please arrange not to drive yourself home. Most patients notice a clear improvement over the following day or two as any temporary haze settles.

Because no incision is made and no stitches are needed, you can return to your normal activities straight away. I may prescribe a short course of anti-inflammatory drops to use for a few days.

Risks and Complications

YAG laser capsulotomy is considered a very safe procedure, and the vast majority of patients experience a significant improvement in vision without any problems. The risk of significant permanent vision loss is very low - around 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 5,000.

Common and usually mild

- **Brief rise in eye pressure** - uncommon and usually self-limiting. If it does occur, it can be easily managed with eye drops or a tablet.
- **Mild inflammation inside the eye** - uncommon, and settles rapidly with anti-inflammatory drops.
- **Floater**s - small dots, lines, or cobwebs that move with eye movement. These are very common after YAG laser and are usually transient.

Rare but serious

- **Retinal detachment** - this occurs in around 1 in 200 to 1 in 500 patients, usually days, weeks, or occasionally months after treatment, and is more likely in patients who are very short-sighted. It is treatable, and modern retinal surgery is successful in restoring good vision in the majority of cases.
- **Damage to the artificial lens** - minor pitting of the lens is occasionally unavoidable but very rarely causes any visual problem.

PLEASE CONTACT ME URGENTLY IF

In the days or weeks after your procedure you develop any of the following:

- Worsening pain not relieved by simple painkillers
- Noticeable redness in the eye
- A sudden deterioration in vision
- New flashing lights, a shower of floaters, or a shadow or curtain across part of your vision

During working hours please contact my secretary. Out of hours, attend the emergency eye service at Sussex Eye Hospital (Eastern Road, Brighton, BN2 5BF) or your nearest eye casualty department.

This leaflet provides general information about YAG laser capsulotomy. It does not replace advice specific to your individual circumstances. Always discuss your symptoms and treatment options with me at your appointment.