

Laser Iridotomy

Information for patients

What are narrow angles?

The pressure in your eye is kept at the right level by fluid coming into the eye behind the iris, and draining through the 'angle' in front of the iris.

In some eyes, this angle is narrower than it should be, and can cause a slow rise in eye pressure, or if it blocked off completely it would cause a severe rise in pressure, known as acute angle-closure. This can be very painful, and cause permanent eye damage.

What is a YAG laser iridotomy?

A laser iridotomy is used as a treatment for acute angle-closure, or to prevent angle-closure happening in people who are at risk of developing it.

It works by creating a small hole in the iris, which helps the drainage angle to open. It is usually done in both eyes.

What will happen during the treatment?

Your vision will be checked, and pupil-constricting drops put in your eyes. You may also be given a tablet to reduce your eye pressure.

After 20 minutes, the doctor will take you through for the treatment. After explaining the procedure, and answering any questions you have, the doctor will ask you to sign a consent form. The laser treatment can then take place.

The doctor will put in some anaesthetic eye drops, and use a moistened contact lens to do the treatment.

You place your chin on a chin-rest, and the doctor will advise you to look in a particular direction. The treatment usually takes a couple of minutes, and you will be aware of flashing lights and clicking sounds, and an odd pressure sensation, but it should not be painful.

Most of the time, one session is enough, but occasionally patients with a dark coloured iris may need a second session to complete the laser treatment.

Are there any risks of having this treatment?

Laser iridotomy is a very safe procedure.

However, there are small risks of the treatment causing raised pressure inside the eye, bleeding from the iris, inflammation, or damage to the retina, including retinal detachment. Many patients do find their vision is a little misty for a day or two after the treatment, but the chance of any more serious side-effects is very low - less than 1%.

Some patients may develop some glare in the long run, but this is not common.

What do I need to do after the treatment?

You may be asked to wait for 30 minutes to have your eye pressure checked again, before you go home. Your Doctor will also prescribe you some eye drops to use for a week, to reduce the chance of any inflammation in the eye.

You are then free to go home, though you should not drive yourself. You may find your vision a little misty for a day or two, and some patients feel a mild headache, which settles quickly with simple paracetamol.

Follow-up or concerns?

You will receive a follow-up appointment at the hospital after this laser treatment.

However, if you have any concerns before then, or feel there is a problem, such as your eye-sight becoming worse, flashing lights, or you feel increasing pain, please contact us for advice on the phone numbers below.

Alternatively, you can visit your optometrist who can examine you and contact us if there is any concern.

For advice, you can phone:

Edinburgh: **0131 536 1174** - Nursing staff in E4

(Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

St. John's: **01506 524 286** - Nursing staff in OPD1

(Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm / Fri 9am-1pm)

After 5pm/weekends: **0131 536 1172** - Nursing staff in E2, Edinburgh