

YAG Laser for Secondary Membrane After Cataract Surgery (Capsulotomy)

What is a “secondary membrane”?

The natural lens of the eye is enclosed in a clear, cellophane-like membrane called the **capsule**. During cataract surgery the front of the capsule is opened. The cloudy lens inside the capsule is removed. In most cases, the back of the capsule is left in one piece, and a plastic lens implant is put in place within the capsule.

In some patients, the capsule can become thickened and cloudy over time. This may happen a year or more after surgery. This thickened capsule is called a “**secondary membrane**.” You may notice a slow decrease in vision, problems with glare, or things might look slightly hazy. If this becomes a problem, your doctor may suggest a YAG laser treatment to help clear your vision.

What does the YAG laser treatment involve?

The YAG laser is used to create an opening in the center of the capsule. You will first receive drops to dilate your pupils and to prevent a rise in your eye pressure. It takes 30-60 minutes for the drops to take effect.

You will have the laser treatment done in the clinic. The laser machine looks much like the slit lamp that the doctor

has used at your visit. Just before the laser treatment, we will give you a numbing drop in your eye. We will also place a focusing contact lens on your eye. The treatment takes about 10 minutes and is not painful.

We may check your eye pressure either right after the laser treatment or one to two hours later. Your eye may feel scratchy or seem blurry for the rest of the day but should be back to normal by the next morning.

Are there any risks with laser treatment?

The risks of the laser treatment are few. The laser can cause the eye pressure to rise during or after the treatment. We will give you a drop **before** the treatment to help prevent this.

We could nick or damage the lens implant if it is hit directly with the laser. This rarely affects your vision.

There could be slight inflammation in the eye. We will give you medicine to take to reduce this. You may notice an increased number of floaters in your eye. Laser treatment can also slightly increase the chance of having a detached retina, although this is quite rare.

What happens after the treatment?

Because your eye will be dilated, you may notice blurry vision for about 4 hours after the treatment. You may feel better wearing sunglasses. Your eye may be scratchy for the rest of the day. There are no restrictions on what you can do.

Your doctor may prescribe you drops to use four times a day for five days after the laser treatment. These drops help prevent inflammation in the eye.

When to Call

- If your eye becomes painful or if you have a decrease in vision
- If you have any questions or concerns

Who to Call

University Station Eye Clinic, 8 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday at **(608) 263-7171**.

When the clinic is closed, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the “eye resident on call.” Give your name and number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is: **1-800-323-8942**. Ask to be transferred to the above number.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4647