

Ocular Laser Therapy

This handout will tell you what to expect before, during, and after ocular laser therapy (photocoagulation). Write down any questions you have so you can ask your doctor or nurse.

What is laser therapy?

Laser therapy (photocoagulation) uses a beam of light (laser beam) to treat diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, retinal tears, and other eye problems.

Laser treatment helps to prevent the growth of new blood vessels in people with diabetic retinopathy. If left untreated, it can cause loss of vision by bleeding, or can cause scarring and retinal detachment.

Lasers are also used to reduce swelling that affects the macula (the part of the retina that helps you to read). Laser treatment is done in the clinic. It takes about 30-60 minutes.

Before the Treatment

- We will use an eye chart to test your vision.
- We will dilate your eye with eye drops.
- When the eye has been dilated, we will take you to the laser room where we will give you an eye drop or ointment to prevent pain. In some cases, we use eye

drops to numb the eye. Other times, we may inject numbing medicine into the tissues around the eye to numb the area.

During the Treatment

- You will be seated at the laser with your head in a headrest, as for an eye exam.
- We hold a contact lens in position on your eye to help focus the light. You may feel the lens touching your eyelid, but the numbing medicine will prevent pain.
- We will direct a bright beam of light (a laser beam) into your eye on to tiny spots on the retina.
- The treatment may last only a few minutes or up to ½ hour.

After the Treatment

You may have mild pain or a headache which may require acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen.

If you received an injection, your eye may remain numb for a few hours after the laser treatment. We will place a patch over the eye to protect it from foreign objects. Keep the patch in place for 4 to 5 hours after the laser treatments or as directed by your doctor.

Tips

Someone will need to drive you home.

Do not plan to drive home yourself.

You may have blurred vision for several days to 6 weeks after the treatment. The blurring most often decreases as the eye heals. In rare cases, the blurring may not go away.

Diabetic patients who were treated for new blood vessels may have partial loss of side (peripheral) vision and/or decreased night vision. Very rarely, damage to the central vision or optic nerve may result in serious permanent loss of vision. Even with laser therapy, symptoms may get worse and bleeding in the eye or retinal detachment may still occur.

Patients who were treated for diabetic swelling of the retina may have temporary blurrier vision. The swelling of the macula may take months to improve.

For patients treated for a retinal tear or detachment, let the clinic know if your symptoms are worse or there is a dark curtain in your side vision after the treatment or worsening floaters or flashing in lights.

Clinic Visits

Your doctor will want to see you in a few days to several months after treatment. You may need further treatment. This depends on your eye condition.

When to Call

- Please call if you have any questions or concerns.
- **If you have sudden loss of vision or severe pain in the treated eye, call the Eye Clinic right away.**

Who to Call

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

After hours, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the “eye resident on call.” Give your name and phone 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.

Please call if you have any questions or concerns.