

## 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.

### Laser Therapy

Laser therapy (photocoagulation) uses a beam of light (laser beam) to treat eye conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, retinal tears and detachment.

For diabetic retinopathy, laser treatment helps to prevent the growth of new blood vessels. If left untreated, it can cause loss of vision by bleeding, or can cause scarring and retinal detachment. Laser may also be used to reduce diabetic swelling of the retina.

Laser treatment is done in the clinic. It takes about 15 - 30 minutes.

### Before the Treatment

- We will dilate your eye with eye drops.
- When the eye has been dilated, we will take you to the laser room. We will use eye drops to numb the surface of the eye. Other times, we may inject numbing medicine into the tissues around the eye.

### 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.
- Alternatively, we may have you reclined in the examination chair and use a handheld lens to direct the laser into your eye.

### After the Treatment

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

If you received a numbing injection, your eye will 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 after the treatment. The blurring most often decreases as the eye heals.

**Diabetic patients who were treated for new blood vessels** may have partial loss of side (peripheral) vision and/or decreased night 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 week 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.

**Toll-free- 1-800-323-8942.** Ask to be transferred to the above number.

Please call if you have 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 © 12/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All Rights Reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4216