

# Antivascular endothelial growth factor (Anti-VEGF) treatment

Department of Ophthalmology

## Introduction

This information sheet is for patients who have been informed that they require Anti-VEGF therapy for their eye condition.

## Why do I need Anti- VEGF treatment?

Some eye diseases cause problems with central vision when blood vessels leak fluid into the retina tissue ( the light sensitive layer at the back of the eye ). If the leak continues, it can cause irreversible damage to your vision .

This occurs as a result of different conditions including:

- Age-related macular degeneration
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Retinal vein occlusion
- Myopic degeneration.

## What is Anti-VEGF ?

Anti-VEGF is a treatment approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) for treating various retinal conditions. Anti-VEGF reduces new blood vessel growth (neovascularisation) and oedema (swelling) in certain eye conditions.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## How long will I need treatment?

Most people will start with a course of three injections, each one no less than one month apart. Following this, you will be required to attend clinic for regular check ups (usually every month at first). This will determine if further treatments are required to stabilise your vision. It is not uncommon for patients to be still receiving treatment after two years but this may be at a less frequent interval.

## Consent

If you decide to undergo treatment, both you and your eye doctor will need to sign and date the informed consent form. The doctor will explain the risks and benefits of the treatment and any alternative treatments available. You will receive a copy of this consent form to take home with you for your reference.

## What are the benefits of the procedure?

It prevents these new, weak blood vessels from growing and leaking and it may even repair some of the damage that has been done.

Over the course of treatment, most patients find that their vision stays the same, and for some, it gets better.

Not every person will have a noticeably better vision with this therapy, but without treatment, your eyesight could deteriorate rapidly.

## What are the potential risks?

Serious complications affecting the eye itself are rare, fewer than one patient out of every 1000 experience problems.

Possible complications include:

- Retinal detachment
- Bleeding
- Cataract (clouding of the lens of the eye)
- Increased pressure in the eye
- Infection in the eye. Although rare, it can be very serious and it is very important to pick it up early.

Please ask the nurse for an information leaflet about this.

Tiny amounts of the drug can get into the blood supply. Due to the way the drug works, it has been suggested that there might be a slight increase in risk of strokes and heart attacks.

However, increasing evidence suggests that the risk is negligible. It is possible that the rate might be higher for people who are already at higher risk.

## What happens on the day of my injection?

Take your medication and eye drops as normal.

You can eat and drink as normal. Wear comfortable clothes on the day of your injection. Do not wear any make up.

Attend at the appointment time on your letter to the main reception desk in Out-Patients, where you will be directed to your designated waiting area.

A health care professional will greet you and perform your visual acuity test (an eye test which involves reading letters on an eye chart from a two metre distance), the eye that you are having treated may be dilated (using eye drops - which will make the pupil bigger and your vision blurred). There will be numerous identity checks but this is to ensure safety. These checks are repetitive, but necessary.

## How is Anti-VEGF therapy given?

The doctor or trained healthcare professional will numb your eye with anaesthetic drops. Anti-VEGF is delivered as an ophthalmic intravitreal injection (an injection of medication into the vitreous - the jelly like substance at back of the eye).

The Anti-VEGF is injected into the jelly (vitreous) part of the eye. He/she will then clean your eye thoroughly. You may feel pressure on your eye when receiving an injection but no significant pain. It is given by a fine injection into the white of your eye (sclera) from where it disperses into the back chamber of your eye.

## How does Anti-VEGF work?

Anti-VEGF blocks chemical pathways that lead to inflammation, leakage from the retinal blood vessels, and oedema. By reducing the swelling in the macula, it may help reverse some of the vision loss that may have occurred. This treatment has been proven effective in large clinical trials.

## Will I feel any pain?

The doctor or trained healthcare professional will numb your eye with drops. He/she will clean your eye thoroughly. You may feel pressure on your eye when receiving the injection, but no significant pain.

## What do I need to do after the procedure?

After your injection, continue to take your prescribed medication and eye drops as normal unless advised otherwise .

## What will happen after the procedure?

- Once the procedure is complete you can go home
- You are advised not to drive home

- You can return to work once your eye is comfortable
- Take your normal painkillers if required.

## What are the immediate side effects I can expect after Anti-VEGF Treatment?

- Eye discomfort or mild pain, improving after the first 24 hours
- Redness of the eye
- You may be able to see a flowing black blob in your vision this will disappear
- Floaters
- A dry gritty eye - do not rub your eye.

You should not drive or operate any machinery until these symptoms have resolved, which is usually within a few days.

## When will I be seen again?

You will have a follow-up appointment which your consultant will co-ordinate.

Please contact the eye emergency department at the hospital if you have any of the following symptoms:

- A lot of pain
- Loss of vision
- You become very sensitive to light
- A very painful red eye.

## Can I still have this treatment if I am planning to get pregnant or I'm currently pregnant or breast-feeding?

Anti-VEGF is not recommended in pregnancy or during breast-feeding because it is not known whether it can affect the baby. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, you must discuss this with your doctor before treatment is started.

If you do become pregnant during the course of intravitreal injections, please inform your doctor immediately.

## What are the alternative treatments?

The choice about which treatment is best for you will be made together with your doctor. This will be based on the condition that you are being treated for together with the risks and benefits of the treatment and your individual circumstances. For the majority of patients currently, Anti-VEGF treatment has been proven to be the most effective in stabilizing vision and preventing further vision loss.

## Laser Therapy

Laser therapy, in certain conditions can prevent or delay loss of vision in some patients with a particular form of wet AMD. In some cases, a combination of laser and Anti- VEGF therapy may be required.

Laser is only suitable for some patients, the doctor will discuss this option if it applies to you.

## Steroids

These are usually given in the form of an implant injected into the eye which is repeated every four to six months as needed, again, typically for 1-2 years. Steroids are only suitable for some patients, the doctor will discuss this option if it applies to you.

## Where can I get more information?

We are here to help, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff, or contact us if you need any further information or advice.

We must seek your consent for any procedure or treatment beforehand. Your doctor will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives where relevant, before they ask for your consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the procedure or treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

### **Clinic coordinator**

#### **For appointment queries:**

01902 695845

Between: 10.00am - 12 noon and 2.00pm - 4.00pm  
Monday – Friday

(Our co-ordinator is not always available to take your calls, so please leave a message and someone will get back to you).

### **Eye Referral Unit**

#### **For advice following an injection:**

01902 695805

Ask to speak to Ophthalmology Nurses

### **Out of hours:**

NHS 111 Tel. 111

These useful numbers are available on a handy card. Please ask a nurse if you require one.

## Other useful contact numbers

The support groups below may be of help:

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People**

105 Judd Street London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 020 7388 1266

E-mail: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

### **The Macular Disease Society**

PO Box 1870 Andover SP10 9AD Registered Charity No. 1001198

Tel: 01264 350551

E-mail: [info@maculardisease.org](mailto:info@maculardisease.org)

### **Age Concern UK**

Hupton House

93-94 Darlington Street

Wolverhampton

WV1 4EX

Contact details

Telephone: 01902 572060

Email address: [mail@ageukwolves.org.uk](mailto:mail@ageukwolves.org.uk)

## References:

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence MidCity Place 71 High Holborn London WC1V 6NA  
Telephone: +44(0)845 003 7780  
Fax: +44(0)845 003 7784  
Email: [nice@nice.org.uk](mailto:nice@nice.org.uk)  
Website: <http://www.nice.org.uk/>
- TAP report No. 1 (1999) Treatment of Age-Related Macular Degeneration with Photodynamic Therapy (TAP) Study Group. Photodynamic therapy of subfoveal choroidal neovascularization in age-related macular degeneration with veteporfin: One-year results of 2 randomised clinical trials - TAP report No. 1 Arch Ophthalmol. 117:1329-1345.e
- Adverse events and complications associated with intravitreal injection of antiVegF agents: a review of the literature (2013)Ghasemi Falavarjani.K, Nguyen.Q, Eye,July, 27(7) 787-794.

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。