

Diabetic Retinopathy

Ophthalmology

Treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy

Treatment for diabetic retinopathy becomes necessary once there is a risk that a person might lose their eye sight due to damage of the retina or its blood vessels caused by diabetes.

If you have not already done, so please read the diabetic retinopathy frequently asked questions information leaflet as it explains what diabetic retinopathy is.

What are the different types of laser treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy, and the benefits?

- Macular laser treatment is done to stop leakage from small blood vessels in the central part of the retina (macular oedema). The aim of this treatment is to “dry-out” the central retina thus preventing further loss of sight
- Pan Retinal Photocoagulation (PRP) is done to treat abnormal blood vessels growing at the back of the eye (Proliferative DR). The aim of this treatment is to “burn” selective areas of the retina and shrink the abnormal blood vessels so they are less likely to bleed and cause sudden loss of sight

What other treatment options are available for Diabetic Retinopathy?

An operation (vitrectomy) may be needed in some severe cases of DR to clear the jelly and remove scar tissue from the back of the eye

Recently, some new drugs have become available for treating diabetic macular oedema. These drugs are injected directly into the eye and may help in stopping the leak from small blood vessels in the central retina (macular oedema). The effect of the drugs tends to wear off and repeated injections are often required.

Lots of research is being undertaken in the field of treatment for diabetic retinopathy, and your eye care professional will be able to answer any queries you may have.

The choice about which treatment is best for you will be made together with your doctor. This will be based on the risks and benefits of the treatment and your individual circumstances.

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.

What is the outcome if I decide not to accept the proposed treatment?

Please raise any concerns you may have about treatment options. After discussing the risks and benefits, you may decide not to proceed with the proposed treatment. Your decision will not affect your care and if you wish we can keep you on a regular follow-up. You may change your mind and decide to go ahead with the treatment at a later date if your doctor feels it is still appropriate for you.

How is laser treatment carried out?

Laser treatment is done in hospital as a day case procedure in the Outpatients clinic. Eye drops are used to dilate the pupil and a local anaesthetic drop is instilled in the eye. You will sit in front of a machine called a slit lamp and a contact lens will be placed on the surface of the eye. This is to minimise eye movements and helps focus the laser beam.

The treatment involves shining very brief intense bursts of laser light to treat specific areas of the retina. The treatment itself is usually not painful but some patients may find the bright light uncomfortable. Often several treatment sessions are required.

Following laser treatment, vision will remain blurred for a few hours. Please do not drive until your vision has recovered. A small number of people occasionally have some pain, which tends to settle with simple pain relief like paracetamol.

What are the side effects , or risks of laser treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy?

- Laser treatment very close to the central retina may result in small "blind spots" in the central vision. Rarely there may be some permanent loss of central vision
- PRP treatment may result in reduction of peripheral vision that may have implications for driving
- Patients needing extensive PRP for severe proliferate disease may develop scarring in the central retina that may affect central vision
- Poor night vision and reduced colour vision may also occur with extensive PRP

Will laser treatment improve my eyesight?

Laser treatment rarely restores normal sight. Best results are achieved if treatment is carried out before significant vision loss. The main aim of laser treatment is "damage limitation" and preventing further loss of sight.

I have had several sessions of laser treatment but my eyesight keeps worsening. Why is this?

Some patients do not respond well to laser treatment and the diabetic damage may continue to worsen vision. Sometimes the central retina (macula) is starved of adequate blood supply and laser treatment is unlikely to prevent vision loss in this situation.

I have had PRP laser but I keep getting repeated bleeding at the back of my eye. Why is this?

Following PRP treatment the abnormal retinal blood vessels shrink but they may not disappear completely. The jelly that normally fills the back of the eye (vitreous) may sometimes pull on these partially shrunk vessels resulting in recurrent bleed inside the eye. In some situations, an operation may be needed to clear the jelly inside the eye.

Follow-up

You shall be seen in clinic after your treatment; the timing of your follow up appointment will depend on the kind of treatment you had and how advanced your diabetic retinopathy is.

Where can I get more information?

We are here to help, please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any further information or advice:

Minor Procedures

01902 695831

Mon - Fri 0830 - 1700 hours

Eye Referral Unit

01902 695805

Mon - Fri 0800 - 1700 hours

Weekends 0800 - 1700 hours

Outside of these hours, please attend the main Emergency Department or contact NHS Direct on telephone number 111.

If you have any personal access needs or require wheelchair access and wish to talk to a member of staff please get in touch using our contact details.

For further information on this subject, please check the following websites:

- www.nscetinopathy.org.uk;
- www.diabetes.org.uk;
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk;
- www.rnib.org.uk;
- www.rcophth.ac.uk;
- www.patient.co.uk.

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。