

SpaMedica



YAG Capsulotomy

Information booklet for patients



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About YAG capsulotomy

The posterior capsule is the fine membrane behind the lens of the eye. This capsule is left in the eye following cataract surgery, to support the artificial lens implant.

In approximately 10% of cataract patients, the transparent membrane becomes thickened. This causes a gradual reduction in vision. This thickening can occur months or even years after surgery. If thickening of the capsule does occur, a YAG laser capsulotomy is required to improve the eyesight. YAG stands for Yttrium, Aluminium and Garnet crystals, which generate the laser.

Why should I have a YAG capsulotomy?

Sometimes, the clouding of the posterior capsule can be very dense. This clouding does not harm the eye, but it can affect vision to the same extent as the original cataract.

If vision is severely impaired, a YAG capsulotomy should be performed. The YAG capsulotomy will reduce glare and restore the vision to how it was after the original cataract surgery.

YAG capsulotomy is a safe, non-invasive procedure, and serious complications are rare.

The procedure

Your vision will be checked first, so please bring your glasses with you to the appointment. Drops to dilate your pupils will be put in one or both eyes, which will blur your vision for several hours.

You will not be able to drive home after using these drops, so please bring a companion with you or make suitable transport arrangements.

The procedure is performed with a laser machine connected to a conventional slit lamp (microscope). Anaesthetic drops are instilled prior to treatment. A contact lens may be placed on the eye to focus the laser beam and keep the eye open.

The procedure lasts approximately 5-10 minutes, during which time you will hear beeping noises and experience bright lights. There is minimal discomfort.

After the treatment

Your vision will be blurred after the YAG laser treatment, but it should improve over the following few hours. You will be given drops to use four times a day, for one week following treatment.

- Commonly, you may notice ‘floaters’ in the eye, but these tend to settle within the first 2 weeks
- If you experience a sudden shower of ‘floaters’, flashes of light in the eye or the feeling of a curtain coming over your vision, you should contact SpaMedica on the number provided, as this may indicate retinal detachment
- You should also contact SpaMedica if you experience severe pain or loss of vision after treatment
- Certain patients will require follow-up appointments in the outpatient clinic. Before you leave, the laser operator will advise whether another appointment is needed
- You may resume driving the following day
- You may need to visit the optician a week after the procedure

Risks of a YAG capsulotomy

As with any medical procedure, laser treatment has its risks. An improvement in eyesight cannot be guaranteed. However, serious complications are rare. Risks of a YAG capsulotomy include:

- Retinal detachment – the retina, which is the inner lining of the eye, can become detached. If left untreated, this can lead to reduced or complete loss of eyesight. However, if detected early, it can usually be successfully treated. The incidence of retinal detachment is rare
- Macular oedema – the retina can become swollen, causing blurry vision. This can be treated medically, but can take many weeks to improve. The chance of macular oedema after YAG capsulotomy is generally rare, but is common in diabetics
- The procedure may cause worsening of glaucoma or cause transient elevation in intraocular pressure. This can usually be medically treated
- Rarely, the lens of the eye may be damaged by the YAG laser, causing visual problems. In exceptional circumstances, the lens may dislocate or subsequently need to be changed
- Very rarely, additional medical or laser treatment may be needed after the YAG capsulotomy procedure to obtain the best vision

How to contact us:

SpaMedica Ltd
Citygate Central
Blantyre Street
Manchester
M15 4SQ

T: 0161 838 0870
E: clinic@spamedica.co.uk
W: www.spamedica.co.uk

Please contact SpaMedica on the above number if you have any concerns or queries relating to your eye.

This number is available 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year for both emergency and general enquiries.

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