

Laser peripheral iridotomy

Laser peripheral iridotomy is used either as a treatment for patients with angle-closure glaucoma, or to prevent angle-closure glaucoma in people who are at risk of developing it.

Angle-closure describes critical narrowing of the eye's drainage angle, causing the eye pressure to quickly rise to very high levels. This can rapidly damage the optic nerve and may cause a type of irreversible sight loss known as glaucoma.

This procedure works by using laser energy to create a small hole in the iris (the coloured part at the front of the eye), which helps the drainage angle to open.

Benefits of treatment

The aim of this procedure is to prevent very high eye pressure caused by angle-closure, so reducing the risk of sight loss from glaucoma. If performed early in patients with narrow angles, the chance of successfully preventing angle-closure is between 66 to 75 per cent. In more advanced cases, medications and/or surgery may also be required.

What to expect on the day

You may eat and drink as normal and take your usual eye medication. Please be prepared to be at the hospital for a couple of hours.

Drops will be put into your eye when you are settled in the clinic. A drop to protect against a rise in eye pressure, an anaesthetic (or numbing) drop, and a drop to make the pupil smaller. This last drop may give you a headache and slightly blur the vision. Paracetamol can be taken to ease any discomfort.

You will be asked to sit at an instrument like the slit lamp used to examine your eyes in clinic – but with a laser attached. The doctor will place a contact lens on your eye, so that he can focus on the iris and apply the laser. The treatment takes approximately 15 minutes per eye.

Half an hour after the procedure your doctor will check the pressure in your eye. You can return to work the next day or carry on with your usual activities.

Side effects and complications

Complications are usually mild and include inflammation, bleeding from the iris, and sometimes an increase in eye pressure.

If your eye pressure increases, then you may need to stay with us longer while we give you additional treatment. If the pressure remains high after a few hours, you will be given tablets and/or drops to use for a few days.

It is also quite common to notice some floaters after the procedure.

It is natural for the eye to be a little red and sore and the vision to be altered for about six hours. Please do not worry as the drops you are given after the procedure will help control this. Please continue with your glaucoma eye drops unless instructed otherwise.

If you experience increasing redness, worsening pain or loss of vision for more than 24 hours, let us know. You will have a follow up consultation after a week or two.