

Argon Laser Trabeculoplasty

Department of Ophthalmology
Surgical & Critical Care

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.



Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you information about argon laser trabeculoplasty (ALT) treatment for your glaucoma.

We hope that it will answer a lot of your questions, but please feel free to ask questions of any of the health professionals that you see.

What is Argon Laser Trabeculoplasty?

Argon laser Trabeculoplasty is a form of laser surgery for people with open-angle glaucoma. The laser is used to make a series of tiny burns on the part of the eye that controls how the fluid leaks out from the front part of the eye back into the blood stream.

The laser treatment opens up the drainage channels in these parts of the eye, and allows more fluid to leak out. Some people respond very well, and, unfortunately, some do not respond at all to the treatment.

We cannot predict who is going to have a good response and who will not. It depends on your type of glaucoma and the physical make-up of your eye.

What happens before the treatment?

Consent - before agreeing to undergo laser treatment you will need to sign a consent form signifying that you understand the risks and benefits of the procedure.

We encourage you to ask any questions which may arise before signing the consent form.

The Procedure

The laser machine looks very similar to the microscope that is used to examine your eye in the clinic.

Before laser treatment, you will be given an eye drop to make the pupil of the eye to be treated small. Some people find that this makes the eye ache a little.

When this drop has worked, you will be given a local anaesthetic eye drop, and settled comfortably at the laser machine, with your chin on the rest and your forehead against the band as usual. At this point a contact lens will be used to give the doctor a good view of the drainage structures in the eye. This lens needs a small amount of a sticky eye drop to help protect your eye and improve the doctor's view. You may feel this sticky drop running down your cheek. The doctor will then move the contact lens slightly, whilst you stay still, to obtain a good view, and will then start the laser treatment.

The laser itself makes very little noise, and flashes a little. Almost everyone finds the procedure pain-free. It takes about 10 to 20 minutes and may be completed in 1 or 2 sessions on different days.

What happens after the treatment?

You may be asked to stay in the department for up to an hour or two so that the doctor or nurse can check the pressure in your eye after the treatment.

You will usually be given anti-inflammatory drops to use for a week or two after the treatment. These drops and how to use them will be explained to you at the time.

You will normally be asked to continue your normal glaucoma eye drops.



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Once you are allowed home, there is no limitation on the activities you can perform although you should not drive for the rest of the day. You will be sent a follow-up appointment to check whether the treatment has worked after a few weeks.

Benefits of the treatment

If the treatment is successful it may reduce the pressure in the eye. This reduction in pressure may slow the progression of your glaucoma and so may help preserve peripheral vision.

Risks of the procedure

The main risk of the procedure is that it may not work, or that your glaucoma may continue to get worse even though the procedure was successful. The effect of both treatments can take several weeks to develop. Even if it does work, there is a chance that the effect will wear off and the pressure may rise again requiring further treatment.

ALT can be repeated once in each eye (2 treatments per eye in total).

Other risks are:

- The pressure in the eye may go up after the procedure and need extra treatment (which in a very, very few cases might mean surgery)
- The treatment may cause inflammation in the eye or clouding of the cornea (the clear window at the front of the eye)
- The treatment rarely causes bleeding in the front of the eye. Usually this settles quickly, but it may need extra treatment for a few days
- There may be some blurring of vision for a few hours

Most of these are usually temporary.

Our estimates of the risks:

- Procedure does not reduce pressure (1 in 10 cases)
- Procedure causes raised pressure requiring prolonged treatment (Very Rare)

Alternatives

Selective laser Trabeculoplasty (SLA) is a modern version of Argon Laser Trabeculoplasty (ALT) which uses a specially designed laser to apply lower energy to the drainage angle to achieve the same result.

Currently, this treatment is only available at a small number of NHS centers or on a private patient basis.

Reference Section

Glaucoma Research Foundation (2013)
Laser Surgery – Argon laser Trabeculoplasty (ALT) Glaucoma Association (IGA)
www.glaucoma-association.com

South Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (2013)
Patient Information Argon or Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty South Devon Healthcare NHS Trust.

Vaughan, Daniel, Ed (1993) General Ophthalmology 13th ed. Stamford, CT: Appleton & Lange.

Contact details for Further Information

For further information please discuss with the person providing your care.

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the



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first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

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Date of issue: February, 2015

Review Period: February, 2018

Author: Ophthalmology Team Leader
IFP-830

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