YAG Capsulotomy
Information booklet for patients
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.
Your pre-operative assessment

At this appointment, our clinical team will test your vision and check the eye pressure.

Drops to dilate the pupils will be put into both eyes before the clinician’s examination. Please note that these drops will make your vision blurry for about 4 hours, therefore you will need someone to drive you home after this appointment.

You will have the opportunity to raise any queries or concerns with members of the clinical team during your pre-assessment.

You will see the Nurse for a health check including blood pressure.

You will then see the clinician for your eye examination. If appropriate you will sign a consent form for the proposed YAG laser procedure and you will then be given an appointment to return for this procedure.

We only treat one eye at a time, so if both eyes require YAG Laser then two appointments will be booked for you approximately 2 weeks apart.
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 immediately after the YAG laser treatment, but it should improve over the following few hours.

- 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

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NHS
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.
If you require immediate help, please call us on our emergency number: 0161 838 0883

- Throbbing pain in or around the operated eye
- A severe frontal headache with, or without, nausea and vomiting. Persistent even after paracetamol
- Progressive deterioration of vision, or loss of vision
- Increasing redness in your eye with severe pain, sticky discharge or lid swelling

General enquiries please call 0330 058 4280

Feedback/Complaints

SpaMedica always listens to our patients and we value your feedback, both good and bad. Please let us know what we do well and what we can do better.

If you are not happy with the service you have received, please let us know by contacting us, by phone, in person or writing to us using the contact details below.

Please state your case clearly giving as much detail as you can, including the date of your appointment and the location of the clinic.

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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.