



# Laser iridotomy

## Information for patients from the Ophthalmology Department

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

### Why am I having an iridotomy?

There is a watery fluid that circulates in the front part of the eye called aqueous humor. Aqueous is constantly produced within the eye and some of it is being drained out all the time through drainage passages. The balance of production and drainage maintains a steady pressure within the eye.

Some people, like you, are more likely to experience blockage in the drainage passages due to the shape of your eye ball. If this happens, there may be an upset of the balance of pressure causing rise in the pressure within your eye.

A sustained rise in this pressure can cause a permanent loss of side and central vision. The iridotomy allows the aqueous humor to circulate freely within the eye minimising the sight threatening pressure rise and the risk of sudden closure of the drainage passageways (acute glaucoma) is prevented.



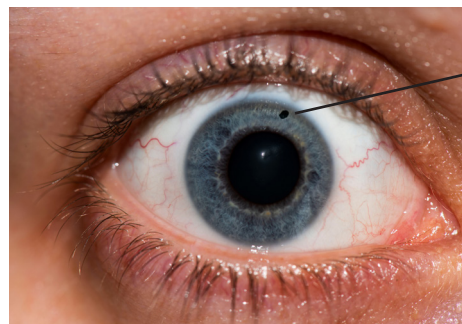
There are three reasons that we perform this procedure:

- to treat an acute attack of acute glaucoma
- to reduce the risk of an acute attack of glaucoma
- to treat chronic narrow angle glaucoma where the drainage channel is very narrow.

This procedure will not improve or restore your sight, it is carried out to stop it getting worse (preserve it).

### What is an iridotomy?

An iridotomy is a small permanent hole created with the help of a laser beam, into the iris (the coloured part of the eye).



Iridotomy

### What will happen when I arrive at hospital?

Your procedure will be carried out in the ophthalmology outpatient department by a member of the medical team. When you arrive in the department, you will have your vision tested and some drops put into your eye to constrict your pupil and help stop it dilating. Once they have had the drops, some patients may experience headaches over the short term. The procedure cannot be performed on a dilated (large) pupil.

When the drops have had the chance to work (around 20 minutes) you will be seated in front of the laser machine. This machine looks similar to a slit lamp (the machine that we use to examine the eye).

### Will I be given an anaesthetic?

You will receive a drop of local anaesthetic and a contact lens will be placed onto the front surface of your eye. This lens will help to steady your eye and focus the laser beam. You will see some bright flashes of light and hear a clicking noise. It may feel a little strange and uncomfortable, but should not be painful.

### How long will I have to stay in hospital?

The procedure takes around 15 minutes, however allow one to two hours for your appointment.

Sometimes the iris structure is thick and the procedure has to be repeated at a later date.

## Are there any risks to this procedure?

- The most common complications are a rise in pressure in your eye, together with some inflammation shortly after your treatment.
- It is not uncommon for a small amount of bleeding to take place from the iris, which is usually controlled by applying gentle pressure. We will usually give you some drops to take home to help prevent this.

### Less common risks

- More significant bleeding in front of your iris - we would need to see you if this happens.
- Clouding of your cornea (window of your eye) - this should usually resolve in days and your vision will return to normal.
- Iridotomy could speed up the development of a cataract.
- Closure of the iridotomy hole over time, as your body tries to repair itself, is very rare but can cause your symptoms to reoccur.

Most of these symptoms will resolve without further treatment. However, you should contact us if:

- you experience pain that is not helped with your usual painkillers (such as paracetamol)
- vomiting
- your pupil remains enlarged after 24 hours
- you experience a lot of flashing lights and/or a sudden increase in 'floaters' (black dots in your line of vision); or
- you experience a loss of part of your vision.

## What happens if you choose not to have the treatment?

There is a high risk of sudden glaucoma, with high pressure, and a painful eye with a risk of permanent loss of vision.

Please note, you have the right to withdraw your consent for treatment at any time.

## Are there any alternatives?

One alternative to having laser treatment is surgery to open your iris (iridotomy). This procedure carries a greater risk of complications than laser. Or alternatively, if you have cataracts, these can sometimes be removed.

## How will I feel after my procedure?

Your vision may remain cloudy for several hours after your procedure. You should not drive until the effects of the drops have worn off.

You will be given eye drops after your procedure, if so instructions for how to use them will be given to you separately.

You can take your usual mild painkillers if you wish.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

We do not follow-up every patient. If we need to see you again, this appointment will be arranged on the day of your treatment.

## What should I do if my eye hurts at home?

If you have any concerns or experience pain or reduced vision for more than 24 hours after your laser treatment, please contact your consultant's secretary, their phone number will be listed on your appointment letter.

If necessary you can contact your GP, optician, or Emergency Department.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)