

Having Photodynamic Therapy for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)



Photodynamic therapy (PDT) for the eyes is done to treat age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is a condition that can lead to loss of eyesight. Photodynamic therapy uses a light-sensitive medicine and a laser to seal off abnormal blood vessels in your eye. It can't restore eyesight that you have already lost. But it may slow down the damage to your central vision.

What to tell your healthcare provider

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take. This includes over-the-counter medicines such as ibuprofen. It also includes vitamins, herbs, and other supplements. And tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have had any recent changes in your health, such as an infection or fever
- Are sensitive or allergic to any medicines, latex, tape, or anesthesia (local and general)
- Are pregnant or think you may be pregnant

Tests before your procedure

You may need some exams before your procedure. Your healthcare provider may use special tools to shine a light in your eye and look at the back of your eye. You may need to have your eyes dilated for this eye exam. You may have imaging tests such as:

- **Fundus fluorescein angiography.** This test uses a special dye and camera to look at the blood flow of the retina and choroid.
- **Optical coherence tomography.** This test uses light waves to take images of the retina and nearby parts of the eye.
- **Fundus autofluorescence.** This test uses fluorescent pigments to make images of the retina.
- **Indocyanine green angiography.** This test uses a type of green dye to make images of the choroid vessels.

Getting ready for your procedure

Talk with your healthcare provider about how to get ready for your procedure. You may need to stop taking some medicines before the procedure, such as blood thinners and aspirin.

Also make sure to:

- Ask a family member or friend to take you home from the hospital. You can't drive yourself.
- Follow any directions you are given for not eating or drinking before your procedure.
- Follow all other instructions from your healthcare provider.

You will be asked to sign a consent form that gives your permission to do the procedure. Read the form carefully. Ask questions before you sign if something is not clear.

On the day of your procedure

This procedure is most often done as an outpatient surgery in a healthcare provider's office or eye clinic. During a typical procedure:

- You will be awake during the surgery. The healthcare provider will use anesthetic eye drops to make sure you don't feel anything.
- A healthcare provider will give you an injection of the light-sensitive medicine.
- The healthcare provider will use eye drops to dilate your pupil. It will stay dilated for several hours after the procedure. The healthcare provider will put a special type of contact lens into the affected eye. This lens helps focus a beam of laser light on the retina using a tool called a slit lamp.
- The healthcare provider will shine a laser on the exact spot in your eye that is affected by the abnormal blood vessels beneath your macula. This will activate the light-sensitive medicine. It will form blood clots in the abnormal vessels. This seals off the abnormal vessels.
- Your eye may be covered with a bandage or patch.

After your procedure

Ask your healthcare provider about what you should expect after your surgery. You should be able to go home the same day. Plan to have someone go home with you after the surgery.

Recovering at home

Be sure to follow your healthcare provider's instructions about eye care and medicines. Your eye may be a little sore after the surgery, but you should be able to take over-the-counter pain medicines.

Your vision may be blurry for a short while after the surgery, but this often goes away. For a few days after the procedure, your eyes and skin will be more sensitive to light. This is because of the light-sensitive medicine in your body. During this time, you will need to stay indoors and away from direct sunlight. If you must go outside, use dark glasses and wear protective clothing. Ask your healthcare provider when it is safe for you to go outside again.

Follow-up care

You will need close follow-up care with your healthcare provider. They will check you for problems and manage your treatment for AMD.

Your provider may have you get some imaging tests again to check if the treatment worked.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Decreased eyesight
- Blurry vision, flashes of light, or a blind spot that doesn't go away
- Eye redness or swelling that gets worse
- Eye pain that doesn't get better or gets worse

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