

Having Laser Photocoagulation for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)



Laser photocoagulation is a type of laser surgery for the eyes. It is done to treat age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is a condition that can lead to loss of eyesight. The macula is an area at the center of the retina. It contains many light-sensitive cells or photoreceptors. These cells help the brain detect light and build images. AMD affects the central part of the retina, causing problems with central vision. It makes it hard to read, drive, or do other daily activities that need detailed vision.

Laser photocoagulation uses a laser to seal off abnormal blood vessels in your eye. This treatment can't restore eyesight that you already have 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)

Tests before your surgery

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

- **Fundus fluorescein angiography (FFA).** This test uses a special dye and camera to look at the blood flow of the retina and choroid.
- **Optical coherence tomography (OCT).** This test uses light waves to take images of the retina.
- **Fundus autofluorescence.** This test uses fluorescent pigments to make images of the retina.
- **Indocyanine green angiography (ICGA).** This test may be used to see the choroid vessels better.

Getting ready for your surgery

Talk with your healthcare provider about how to get ready for your surgery. 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 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 surgery

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

- You will be awake during the surgery. You may be given medicine to help you relax. The healthcare provider may use anesthetic eye drops and injections to make sure you don't feel anything.
- Eye drops will be used to dilate your pupil. It will stay dilated for several hours after the surgery. A special type of contact lens will be put into the affected eye. This is after you have had numbing drops placed on the eye. This lens helps focus a beam of laser light on the retina using a tool called a slit lamp.
- The healthcare provider uses the laser to seal off the abnormal blood vessels beneath the macula.
- Your eye may be covered with a bandage or patch.

After your surgery

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. You may need to wear an eye patch or dark glasses for a day or so. Ask your healthcare provider if there are certain activities you should not do as you recover.

Your eyesight may be blurry for a short while after the surgery. Remember that the surgery does often cause an area of new eyesight loss. But in the long term, it may help prevent your eyesight from getting worse.

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.

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
- Eye redness or swelling that gets worse
- Eye pain that doesn't get better or gets worse

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