BUNBURY & BUSSELTON EYE SPECIALISTS

PATIENT INFO AND ADVICE

What is laser iridotomy?

Laser iridotomy is a surgical procedure used to treat angle-closure glaucoma. This laser procedure is also performed in patients who are at risk for angle-closure glaucoma. As with many medical conditions, it is preferable to treat patients at risk and thereby avoid vision loss.

What is angle-closure glaucoma?

Like other forms of glaucoma, angle-closure glaucoma has to do with pressure inside the eye. A normal eye constantly produces a certain amount of clear liquid called **aqueous humour,** which circulates inside the front portion of the eye. An equal amount of this fluid flows out of the eye through a very tiny drainage system called the **drainage angle,** thus maintaining a constant level of pressure within the eye.

There are two main types of glaucoma. The most common type is **open-angle glaucoma,** in which fluid drains too slowly from the eye and causes a chronic rise in eye pressure. In contrast, angle-closure glaucoma causes a more sudden rise in eye pressure.

In **angle-closure glaucoma,** the drainage angle may become partially or completely blocked. The iris (the coloured part of the eye**)** may completely block the aqueous fluid from leaving the eye, much like a plug in a sink. In this situation, the pressure inside the eye can rise very quickly and cause an acute angle-closure glaucoma attack.

The symptoms of an angle-closure glaucoma attack?

- severe ocular pain
- redness
- decreased vision
- colored halos
- headache
- nausea and vomiting.

An angle- closure glaucoma attack must be treated immediately.

Individuals **at risk** of developing angle-closure glaucoma often have few or no symptoms prior to the attack. People who are at risk for developing angle- closure glaucoma should have a laser iridotomy.

What happens during laser iridotomy?

Using a laser, a small hole is made in the iris to create a new pathway for the aqueous fluid to drain from your eye.

The surgery is performed by your ophthalmologist usually in his or her rooms. Your eye will be numbed with eye drops. A contact lens is placed on your eye to serve as a precise guide for the laser. A hole about the size of a pinhead is made in your iris, and will be concealed from view by your upper eyelid.

The actual procedure will only take a few minutes. You should plan to have someone drive you home afterward.

Are there any risks or side effects?

Complications following laser iridotomy are uncommon. They include:

- A spike in eye pressure;
- Inflammation;
- Cataract;
- Bleeding;
- Need for re-treatment;
- Blurred vision;
- Light image or streak;
- Pain.

The risks and side effects of glaucoma treatment are always balanced with the greater risk of leaving glaucoma untreated.

Disclaimer: This leaflet is intended to provide general information only. It should not be used for diagnostic or treatment purposes. Please consult with your healthcare provider for guidance about any specific medical conditions.

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