

Mr Anthony G Tyers

FRCS FRCSEd FRCOphth

New Hall Hospital Bodenham Salisbury Wiltshire SP5 4EY

Secretary tel: 01722 439680/422333 fax: 01722 410143

RETINAL LASER TREATMENT

Q *What is the retinal laser?*

A It is a special laser designed for use with the eye, especially the retina.

Q *What is the retinal laser used to treat?*

A The retina lines the inside of the back of the eye. The commonest use of the retinal laser is to treat the effects of diabetes on the retina. It is also used to treat tears in the retina. Less commonly the retinal laser can be used to treat other retinal conditions including swelling at the back of the eye and some patients with macular degeneration. It is occasionally used also in the treatment of glaucoma.

Q *What happens during retinal laser treatment?*

A Depending on the condition being treated drops will normally be put into your eye to dilate the pupil so that the retina can be seen clearly. These work in about 20 minutes. Then local anaesthetic eye drops will be put in and you will be asked to put your chin and forehead into a special headrest so that the eye is lined up with the laser. A special contact lens is placed on the eye – this is not uncomfortable.

During the laser treatment you will simply see flashes of light. These are not uncomfortable although you may experience mild sensations in the eye. Very occasionally the laser treatment can be uncomfortable. If this happens extra local anaesthetic can be given around the eye or the treatment can be rebooked and given under general anaesthetic in the operating theatre.

Depending on the condition being treated the laser treatment usually lasts between 5 and 15 minutes; occasionally it is longer.

Q *Are there any side-effects from retinal laser treatment?*

A Immediately after treatment the eye will see less well from the bright laser light; the vision returns to normal in about 10 minutes. There are usually no lasting side-effects. However, with extensive laser treatment the visual field may be reduced to some extent. This possibility would normally be discussed with you before giving the treatment. Other complications are very uncommon but if there is any significant risk of any of them occurring this would be discussed with you before the treatment.

Q *Does laser treatment ever need to be repeated?*

A Yes. The treatment of some eye conditions requires several laser sessions. Others can be treated in one session.

Q *What are the results of laser treatment?*

A There is such a wide variety of conditions treated with laser that the results you can expect would normally be discussed with you before the treatment.

Q *Will I see the benefit of the laser treatment straight away?*

A No. The effect of retinal laser treatment is often gradual over several weeks and you will probably not notice a significant difference in your vision straight after the treatment.

*Further copies of this and other Information Sheets can be downloaded
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