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YAG LASER TREATMENT AFTER CATARACT SURGERY

Q *What is a YAG laser?*

A It is a special laser designed to treat cloudy membranes inside the eye.

Q *Why is it needed after cataract surgery?*

A A cataract is when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy. At cataract surgery the cloudy part of the lens is removed leaving a clear membrane. A plastic replacement lens is implanted in front of this membrane. In a small percentage (less than 10%) of people after cataract surgery the clear membrane gradually becomes cloudy. This may occur within a few months. The YAG laser is used to treat this cloudy membrane.

Q *How does the YAG laser clear the membrane?*

A By focusing on the membrane the laser creates a gap in the centre of the membrane which restores the vision.

Q *What happens during YAG laser treatment?*

A It is an outpatient treatment. The pupil of your eye will be enlarged with eye drops so that the cloudy membrane can be clearly seen. Then anaesthetic eye drops are put into your eye. You will be asked to put your chin and forehead against a special headrest which lines up the eye with the laser and a small contact lens is placed onto the eye. This is not uncomfortable.

During the treatment which lasts 1-2 minutes you will see some tiny red dots which help to focus the laser on the cloudy membrane. You will then see some small flashes of light which are the actual laser treatments. You may be aware of slight sensations during the treatments but these are not uncomfortable.

Q *Will I be given eyedrops after the treatment?*

A Some surgeons routinely prescribe drops for a week or so following YAG laser treatment.

Q *How soon will my vision be restored?*

A The vision normally improves within 24 hours, often sooner.

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

A A few patients experience black specks in the vision. These usually clear in a few weeks. More serious complications are very rare and include a permanent rise in pressure, inflammation inside the eye or detachment of the retina. All of these can be treated.

Q *Will the YAG laser treatment need to be repeated?*

A No. The membrane does not become cloudy again. Very occasionally the gap created in the membrane is considered to be too small and further treatment can then enlarge it but this is rarely required.

Q *Is there any other way of treating the cloudy membrane?*

A No. Before the YAG laser became available it was necessary to re-operate on the eye in theatre. A hole was cut into the membrane surgically with a fine knife. The risks of this were much greater than the modern YAG laser treatment.

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