

Posterior capsule opacification

People who have had cataract surgery with a lens implant can develop clouding behind the artificial intraocular lens in their eye, making it difficult to see. This condition is called posterior capsular opacification, sometimes abbreviated as PCO.

The lens of your eye is held in a thin clear lining called a capsule. During cataract surgery the natural lens is removed from the capsule and replaced with a clear plastic lens. Over time in some patients the capsule behind the lens can thicken. This can stop light passing through to the light-sensitive membrane at the back of your eye, resulting in blurred vision, glare or light sensitivity in certain conditions. These may include difficulty while driving at night.

YAG laser capsulotomy is a type of laser treatment that is used to make a hole in the capsule to allow light to pass through to the back of the eye and help you see better.

The treatment is routinely done as an out-patient procedure and involves no surgical cuts.

Benefits

Clearer vision

Colour vision improves

Objects appear sharper and clearer

Risks

Laser eye treatment for posterior capsular opacification is very successful but all medical procedures carry an element of risk.

Failure of improvement in sight; This can happen if other conditions also affect the eye such as macular degeneration, optic nerve damage. This is usually known prior to the procedure. The doctor will usually tell you about this if he suspects that vision may not improve.

Floaters; Almost all patients will experience floaters. These can take a variable time to settle down. Some floaters will never settle down. In most cases, the brain gets used to it and starts ignoring the floater.

Glare; This may happen as a consequence of lens pits or small dots on the substance of the lens.

Double vision; Sometimes patients can get double vision. The reasons for this may be diverse and complicated.

Damage or dislocation of the lens; this is rare but may require further lens replacement or lens readjustment surgery.

Slight risk of increased pressure in the eye after laser treatment; this can be treated with eye drops.

Retinal detachment; It's also possible, but very unusual, that your retina (a layer of nerves at the back of your eye) can become detached from the back of the eye. If this happens you may need to have surgery straight away to prevent you from losing your sight.

Although complications from this procedure are uncommon, the chance of any problems depends on the overall health of your eye and other factors such as your general health. Ask your surgeon to explain how any risks apply to you.

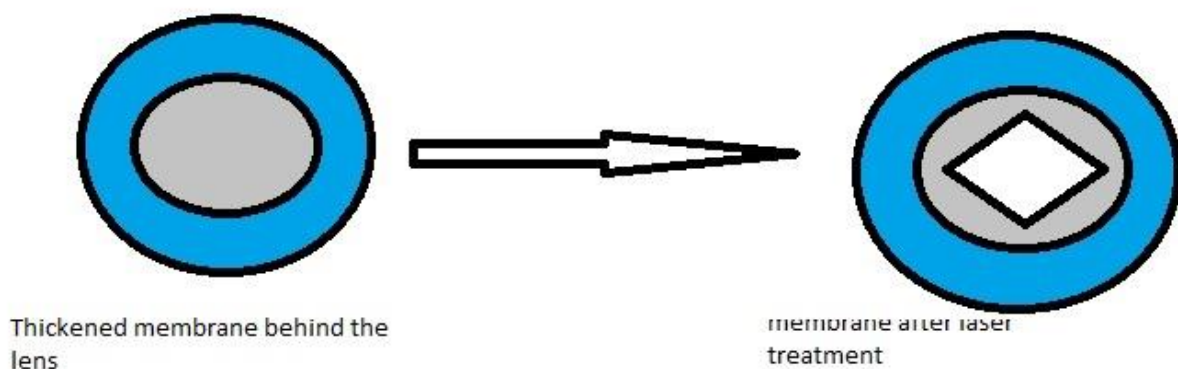
About the procedure

The treatment is usually carried out in the consulting room. About 20 minutes before the treatment, you will have anaesthetic eye drops put into your eye to gently numb the surface of the eye. You may also have another set of eye drops to open up (dilate) your pupil. These drops may sting a little and you may not be able to see properly for a while – things may be a bit blurred or distorted.

You will be asked to sit in a chair and your surgeon will put a small contact lens on your eye. You will then be asked to rest your chin on the frame of the laser machine to help keep your eye still. Your surgeon will carefully direct a laser beam into your eye. The beam will make a hole in the clouded capsule behind the lens so that light will be able to pass through this to the back of the eye.

The procedure usually takes five minutes and is not painful.

After the eye drops have worn off you should notice that the cloudiness has eased and your vision has improved. The extent of the improvement depends on how cloudy your sight was to start with and the overall health of your eye.



Disclaimer: This information leaflet is produced to help increase awareness regarding floaters. It is not intended to replace professional medical advice or to provide advice in any special individual circumstance. Please seek expert medical advice regarding your specific medical condition.