

Information for patients and carers

Trabeculectomy Surgery Glaucoma Treatment



Why have I been advised by my doctor to have a trabeculectomy?

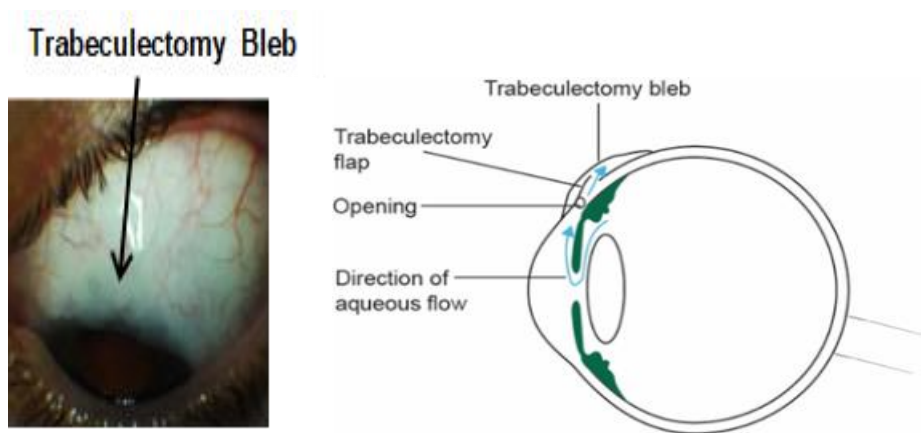
Glaucoma may lead to progressive loss of vision if the pressure inside the eye (intra ocular pressure - IOP) is not low enough. Trabeculectomy is recommended when eye drops, and laser procedure are not effective in controlling the eye pressure and there is a risk of losing sight. The surgery does not improve vision but lowers the IOP to prevent further damage due to glaucoma.

What is a trabeculectomy?

A trabeculectomy is done usually as a day case procedure under general or local anaesthesia, this can be the patient's choice but will also depend on other medical indications.

The surgery involves creating a trap door flap in the white of the eye. Underneath this, an opening is made through which fluid from inside the eye (aqueous fluid) flows into a 'bleb' - a small reservoir covered by the upper lid from which the fluid is absorbed. The operation site is treated with an anti-scarring agent (Mitomycin C) to prevent scar tissue

Diagram showing flow of aqueous through normal trabeculectomy



What are the risks and complications associated with trabeculectomy surgery?

Reduced vision

This is common in the first two weeks, due to inflammation, changes in the pressure levels and minor bleeding inside the eye. Usually, vision improves in a couple of weeks. A few patients with advanced glaucoma may develop permanently reduced vision; however, this is very unusual.

Discomfort

Discomfort due to the stitches is common and usually settles within a few weeks. Discomfort can also be due to the presence of the drainage channel known as the trabeculectomy bleb which can feel like a foreign body as it is directly under the upper lid. Most people get used to it and the feeling is quite well tolerated.

Droopy eye lid

A small percentage of patients (8-12%) can develop a droopy eye lid which can be surgically lifted if needed. Your doctor will discuss this with you if this occurs.

Cataract

There is an increased likelihood of developing a cataract after surgery. However, this can be managed by a glaucoma surgeon performing cataract surgery using certain extra measures, these may include frequent follow up appointments after surgery, longer use of anti-inflammatory drops (steroid) and anti-scarring agents.

Infection and loss of vision in the eye

There is a small risk of infection (0.8-3.8%) after any eye surgery including trabeculectomy, so extreme caution is needed in an event of any redness or soreness experienced which could even happen many years after the original operation.

Low pressures (hypotony)

Some eyes can develop very low pressures which can cause loss of vision; further surgery may be required to correct it.

Bleeding

There is a significant but small risk of bleeding (1 in 1000) inside the eye which can cause loss of vision.

How successful is trabeculectomy?

At Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, 92% of patients achieved a successful outcome in the first year following the procedure. In a minority of patients, glaucoma progresses despite having a successful trabeculectomy.

What is the follow up schedule after surgery?

All patients are reviewed the day after and then weekly for 6 weeks or less, then followed by a 2 and 3 month review. Rarely, the reviews may be more frequent. It is advisable not to take any holidays for a short period following the procedure as the success of the operation depends on close monitoring post operatively.

Will I need to use my regular anti-glaucoma eye drops?

You **MUST NOT** use your glaucoma drops in the eye that has been operated on. You will be given **DIFFERENT** eye drops after the surgery.

However, you must continue to use glaucoma drops in the other eye. If you have been taking Diamox tablets (acetazolamide), these must be discontinued after the surgery.

What will my vision be like after surgery?

This is common in the first two weeks due to inflammation, changes in the pressure levels and minor bleeding inside the eye. Usually, vision improves in a few weeks. A few patients with advanced glaucoma may develop permanently reduced vision which might be the difference of a line or two on the reading chart, although this is uncommon. It is also possible to require glasses after surgery or a change in prescription as the trabeculectomy can entail changes to the globe curvature.

Can I drive?

If you met the legal requirements for driving prior to surgery, you can continue. Please discuss this with the doctor in clinic.

What can I do after trabeculectomy surgery?

Returning to work

Most people can return to office-based work two weeks after the operation. Those involved in heavy, manual work may need a longer time off work.

Activity

You can read, watch TV, and use computers as soon as you wish. Gentle exercise such as walking is fine, but avoid strenuous exercise (running, contact sports, fitness workouts, swimming), and lifting heavy objects for 3 months after the operation. We apply a clear plastic shield over the eye at the end of surgery; we recommend that you wear this while sleeping for a few weeks after surgery to prevent inadvertent rubbing of the eye.

Contact lens use after trabeculectomy surgery

Due to the bleb created after the operation, contact lens wear is not possible.

Flying after surgery

It is safe to fly after surgery, but you must take account of the follow up care needed after surgery.

Contact details

If you experience any problems, such as sudden loss of vision or pain, contact the number below:

Ophthalmology telephone triage service: **01257 245346**

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm

If you feel that your eye condition needs an urgent assessment outside of these hours, please attend the nearest Emergency Department.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

www.glaucoma-association.com

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

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This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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