

Trabectome surgery

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What is Trabectome?

Trabectome surgery is a minimally invasive glaucoma operation to lower eye pressure. It has a good safety profile and is often combined with cataract removal to lower eye pressure.

This is a keyhole operation. Through a small incision in the eye, a specially designed probe is placed to remove a section of trabecular meshwork using a small electrical pulse. The trabecular meshwork is a filter-like structure which is situated close to the iris on the inside of the eye and through which fluid (called 'aqueous humour') leaves the eye. The operation works by increasing drainage of aqueous humour through the normal channels and then away into the blood stream.

Trabectome surgery can be performed alone but often works well when combined with cataract removal. The cataract is removed using the same incision.

Why is it needed?

Trabectome surgery may be recommended when your consultant considers that you have glaucoma and/or raised eye pressure that is not sufficiently controlled with eye drops or laser. You may also have cataract causing visual symptoms e.g. blurred vision, glare.

What does it involve?

The procedure may be performed under either local (injection under the eye) or general anaesthesia.

The surgery takes place in the operating theatre. If performed alone, it takes approximately 20 minutes. If combined with cataract surgery, it usually takes about 40 minutes.

You will have a pad on your eye afterwards until the following day.

What are the alternatives?

Eye drops, laser treatment or types of surgical procedure are other means of reducing eye pressure.

Trabectome is usually recommended if eye drops and/or laser has been ineffective. It is a less invasive procedure, with fewer risks than some other glaucoma operations.

Special preparations

No special preparations are usually necessary.

You should continue your usual glaucoma eye drops until the day of surgery.

Your eye specialist may recommend you stop blood-thinning tablets shortly before the operation.

How will I feel during the procedure?

If performed under local anaesthetic, you will lie flat during the operation. You should feel no discomfort.

How will I feel afterwards?

After surgery, the eye may feel uncomfortable and your vision is likely to be blurred for a few days. It should not be painful.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be asked to continue to take your previous glaucoma eye drops. Sometimes, it will be possible to stop these at a later date.

You will also be given additional steroid, antibiotic and pupil-constricting eye drops which you will usually take for 4 weeks.

It is a day case operation, meaning you should be able to go home after a few hours.

You should not travel home alone.

What are the risks?

All eye surgery carries a very rare chance of loss of vision because of infection or severe bleeding under the retina.

In addition, there is often a small amount of bleeding into the front chamber of the eye. This may blur the vision for a few days.

Aftercare

You will be seen the day after surgery and one week later.

Heavy lifting and other strenuous activities should be avoided for at least one week. Although some patients enjoy clear vision the next day, the visual recovery in many cases is not as rapid as following cataract surgery and may take several days to improve. This may affect your ability to drive or handle equipment during this time.

How successful is the Trabectome?

Studies indicate that trabectome usually lowers the eye pressure by about 30%, while also decreasing the number of glaucoma eye drops that need to be taken.

What if the eye pressure is not low enough after Trabectome?

Because trabectome surgery does not always work, glaucoma medications or additional glaucoma surgery may be needed. Fortunately, trabectome surgery does not affect the success of subsequent glaucoma operations if needed.

PALS

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'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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