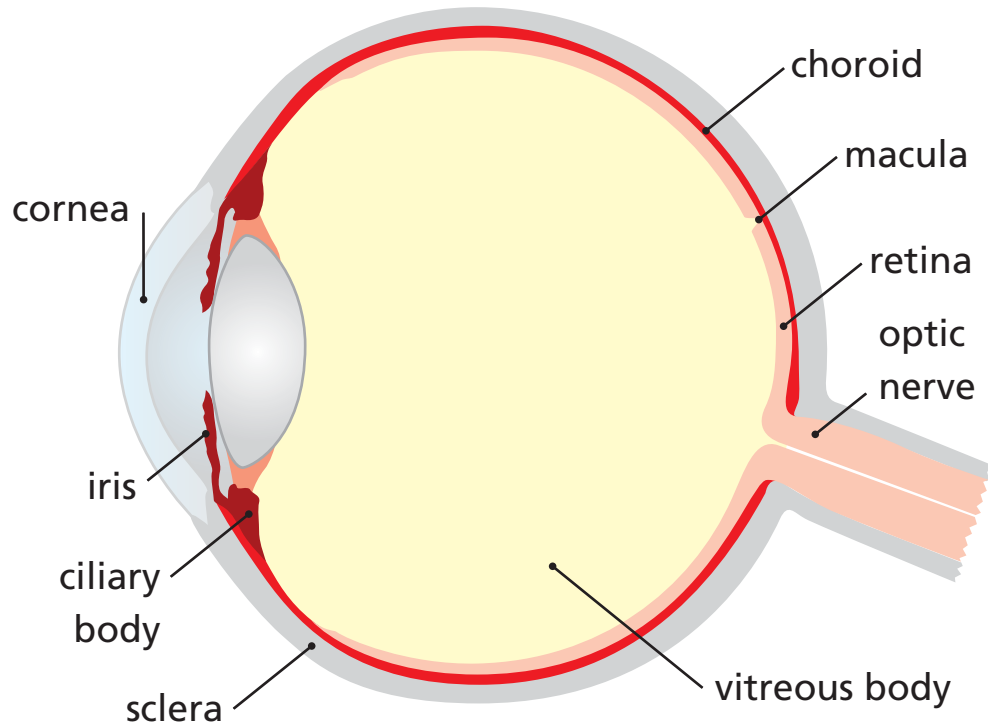




laser treatment for **Macular Oedema**

This information sheet is written for patients who may undergo laser photocoagulation to an area of macular oedema (leaking blood vessels causing fluid to accumulate in the macula).



Cross section of the eye

What is macular oedema?

The macula is the central part of the retina at the back of the eye. It is responsible for fine vision (reading, writing, watching television, and recognising faces). Leaking blood vessels cause fluid to accumulate in the macula. This is the most frequent cause of vision loss among patients with diabetes and other retinal disorders such as branch retinal vein occlusion.

What is laser photocoagulation?

In this type of laser treatment, light rays are directed into the eye and focused onto a tiny spot on the retina. The light produces heat, which prevents leakage from the abnormal blood vessels. The aim of the treatment is to reduce the likelihood of further visual loss from these leaking blood vessels. The effectiveness of this treatment has been shown in several clinical trials in the late 1980s.

What does the treatment involve?

Diagnosis of the macular oedema is made by clinical examination by your ophthalmologist. Sometimes additional information is required to optimise treatment and a fluorescein angiogram test may be requested. A type of contact lens is placed on the eye to be treated to view the abnormal blood vessels and treat your eye safely. Usually local anaesthetic eye drops are applied that will minimise the discomfort of the lens on the surface of the eye. With this method of anaesthesia, the eye is able to move and you will be required to cooperate with the doctor performing the laser to ensure that the laser burns only the abnormal blood vessel and not the surrounding normal nerves. It is extremely important that you keep your eye and head still during the procedure to aid accurate treatment. There is minimal discomfort associated with this 5 to 10 minute procedure. An alternative method of anaesthesia that is rarely required is injection of local anaesthetic beneath the eyelid and adjacent to the eyeball to immobilise the eye and to minimise discomfort during treatment.

How effective is the treatment?

The aim of the treatment is stabilisation of your current vision. The major benefit is to slow down the natural rate of deterioration and reduce the risk of further visual loss. No safe proven alternative exists to reduce the likelihood of losing vision from macular oedema. Your vision may actually deteriorate following treatment. In many cases, this improves over several weeks to months. Permanent worsening of vision usually is due to an inability to halt the natural deterioration in visual function caused by macular oedema. However, it is also rarely possible that your vision may decline as a direct result of treatment.



Does the treatment last indefinitely?

After treatment, periodic re-examination is necessary to monitor your response to treatment and detect any changes in the status of your eye, especially any change that would require additional treatment. Usually, more than one laser treatment is required, but the treatments are often spaced over a period of four to six months.

You should understand that it is your responsibility to maintain follow-up appointments necessary after laser treatment. In diabetic patients optimum control of their diabetes and blood pressure may help prevent further eye problems in the long term.

What are the side effects of the treatment?

Your vision may continue to deteriorate following treatment due to the inability of the laser treatment to halt the natural decline in vision caused by macula oedema. However, there is a very small risk of sudden reduction of vision as a direct result of treatment. Vision disturbance may also occur that takes the form of noticing dark or hazy spots just off centre. In many cases, this deterioration subsequently improves over several weeks to months. Permanent worsening of vision usually is due to an inability to halt the deterioration in visual function.

Other information

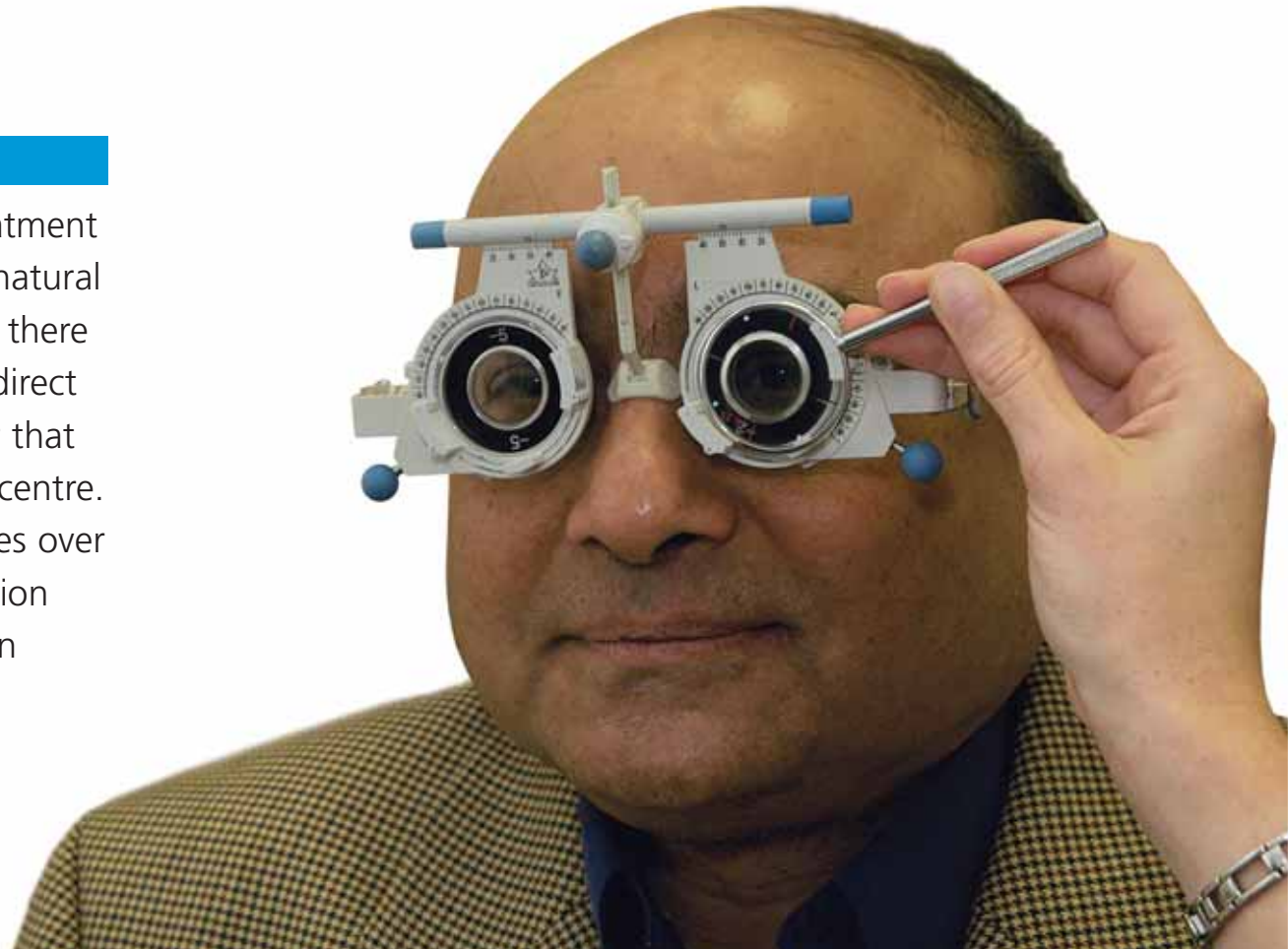
Please note that the DVLA may need to be notified of your condition, particularly if you require many treatments in both eyes, as your driving vision may be impaired.

For further information please call:

DVLA Drivers Medical Group

Ph: 0870 600 0301

(Monday – Friday, 8.15am - 4.30pm).



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