

# Ophthalmology

## Bleb Needling

This leaflet aims to explain to you what a needling procedure is, and why it has been recommended by your doctor.

### **What is a bleb needling?**

A bleb needling is a procedure which is sometimes needed by people who have had a Trabeculectomy operation.

During a trabeculectomy, a tiny opening is made in your eye to relieve pressure by allowing fluid to escape. This is covered by soft tissue and hidden by your top eyelid.

Sometimes the soft tissue around the opening can scar up, which means that the pressure in your eye can increase. This is the main cause of failure of trabeculectomy surgery. This can happen either soon after the trabeculectomy, or months or years later.

The needling opens up the scar tissue and allows the trabeculectomy to start working again.

### **Why has it been recommended for me?**

You have developed scar tissue, which means that your trabeculectomy is not working properly. Your doctor has recommended the needling to try to get your trabeculectomy functioning and lower your eye pressure.

### **What does the needling involve?**

You will come into hospital to have this procedure in the operating theatre. This procedure is usually done under numbing drops as a day case. A small number of patients may have a little injection to numb the eye or put patient to sleep (general anaesthetic). This will be discussed with you at the time of booking your procedure.



## Patient Information

During the needling, a fine needle is used to break down the scar tissue. An injection of anti-scarring medication (5-fluorouracil or Mitomycin C) is normally given afterwards to increase the chance of the procedure being successful. You may be given a pad or clear shield to wear home afterwards and will be seen again soon afterwards. This may be the next day in some cases, or the following week, depending how the procedure has gone in your case.

### **Are there any risks?**

The needling works well in over half of patients. Some patients may develop scar tissue which requires a second needling procedure months or years later. Some patients may require more than one needling procedure in order to get the bleb to function. For a small number of people, a different type of glaucoma surgery may be needed later if the scar tissue comes back.

In some patients, the intraocular pressure may be temporarily too low (hypotony). This can mean that the vision is worse than normal. Usually, this problem corrects itself with time, but a small number of patients may need extra treatments to bring the pressure up to a normal level.

Some people can have some blurring of vision as a result of the anti-scarring medication used. This corrects itself with time in almost all cases.

The risk of infection or bleeding into the eye is very small with this procedure (less than 1 in 1000). This could affect your eyesight. The risk of losing vision as a result of a needling is very small (1 in 1000 or less).

### **Is there anything I can or can't do after the surgery?**

It is very important to avoid rubbing the eye, as this can cause the pressure to drop too low. For this reason, we may ask you to wear a shield at night for a week or two after their surgery. You should also avoid bending, heavy lifting and excessive physical exertion.

## Patient Information

### **When do I need to contact the hospital?**

Contact the hospital or eye casualty urgently if:

- Your eye becomes more painful or more red than on the day you went home.
- Your eye develops a sticky discharge.
- Your lids start to swell.
- Your vision begins to deteriorate

### **Useful Contact details for urgent support**

Eye Casualty at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (Clifford Bridge Road, Coventry): Tel 02476964800

Open from:           Monday to Thursday 08.30am – 4.30pm  
                              Friday 08.30am – 4.00pm  
                              Saturday 08.30am – 12.00pm

**Outside these opening times please attend the Main Accident and Emergency Department at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire.**

### **Useful Contact details for further information**

**UHCW Secretaries:**   Michelle Donnelly: 02476966502  
                                  Jayne Owen: 02476966502  
                                  Samantha Wade 02476966527

### **International Glaucoma Association**

Woodcote House, 15 Highpoint Business Village  
Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH  
Tel: **1233 64 81 70**  
Email: [info@iga.org.uk](mailto:info@iga.org.uk)  
Website: [www.glaucoma-association.com](http://www.glaucoma-association.com)

## Patient Information

### **Royal College of Ophthalmologists**

17 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QW

Tel: 020 7935 0702

Website: [www.rcophth.ac.uk](http://www.rcophth.ac.uk)

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People**

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact us on 02476966333 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

#### **Document History**

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