

Laser Treatment for Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a disease of the eye caused when naturally occurring fluid in the eye doesn't drain properly. As the fluid builds up, pressure inside the eye increases and damages the optic nerve and retina, causing progressive and permanent vision loss.

There are two types of glaucoma - Open Angle Glaucoma and the more rare Acute Angle Closure Glaucoma. This rare type occurs because of a blockage in the front of the eye, usually in the space between the iris and cornea. With this type of glaucoma, pressure within the eye can rise sharply and permanent damage can occur in hours or days.

Laser iridotomy is a laser surgery procedure that is used to treat an attack of acute angle closure glaucoma or used prophylactically to prevent an attack in patients who are susceptible. A laser emits a special type of high energy light, which can be accurately focused, and with laser iridotomy, we use this very focused beam of laser light to create a hole on the outer edge of the iris. (The iris is the colored part of your eye.)

This opening allows the fluid to flow between the front part of the eye and the area behind the iris. This helps to decrease the dangerous pressure in the eye and usually helps to prevent the quick buildup of pressure in the eye that is so dangerous with acute angle closure glaucoma. It may even mean that you do not have to continue taking medication to control your glaucoma.

Laser iridotomy is an outpatient, usually painless procedure. You may feel a sensation of heat in the eye during laser procedures, but no pain during or afterward.

As with any surgery, there are risks. The complications from laser iridotomy may include brief blurred vision, swelling of the cornea, bleeding or increased pressure in the eye. More rare risks include burning the inner lining of the eye, cataracts or development of another type of glaucoma. We will discuss risks and complications with you before your surgery.

It is possible for the new opening to become blocked, allowing a recurrence of acute angle closure and requiring another iridotomy procedure. Because of this, and because high pressure in your eyes may continue or recur after laser iridotomy, you will need to be monitored closely. We follow our glaucoma patients, even after preventative treatment, closely. We want to make sure you keep your vision for a lifetime!